

BEARING THE CROSS

Volume 2

Redux

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Volume II: Redux

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Alertness Books ▽ ▲ ▽

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ISBN: 978-0-9729754-3-8

Chapter I A Man's Heart Plans His Way

In the weeks following John's conviction in Viña del Mar on October 16, 2020, the people of the Chilean Right went through periods of depression over the presumed disaster that was about to befall the country due to the rise of hard-left ideology. Chile could become the next Venezuela or Cuba in just a few years. John's sentencing evidenced the tremendous injustice promulgated by the Left and especially communists. It made rightists' commitment and support for John even greater. He had been unjustly accused and convicted of attempted murder when all he had done was defend himself. His life was left in shambles after over a year of imprisonment. So, Chilean, Canadian, American, British, and rightists from other countries, like New Zealand, along with Baptists, Presbyterians, old-line Catholics, and Libertarians, backed John in his effort to expand his legal team for his upcoming Supreme Court case. It would not be easy to convince the public defender's office to allow private partners, nor was the future involvement of the Italian Ambassador clear. However, things were moving ahead and John hoped to get lawyers Miguel Schweitzer and his partner Matías Balmaceda on board to help the public defenders.

John was working on finding ways to publish his first two books written in prison in English, and translated into Spanish. He and others were working on fundraising for legal expenses. Public defenders Guillermo Améstica and Claudio Fierro continued to do their jobs, defending John, recently rebuffing attempts by the district attorney to keep the appeal in the Valparaíso appeals courts. Hence, there was some optimism in the air.

Meanwhile, back in 118, life went on its dour track, awaiting the denouement of John's legal process in January. Coping with the next two months, before the Supreme Court hearing in January 2021, was hardly joyous for John, who kept busy reading books, writing, and playing chess. He decided that Rubén's few recent victories had been flukes caused by John's boredom leading to carelessness. In one game, he was up by six points and then, oddly, literally gave away a knight, then a rook and a pawn, resulting in losing the game. Once he got his wits back about him, he won many subsequent games against Rubén, Ismael, Jorge, and Alejandro. So, it was, perhaps, just a matter of not paying enough attention at times.

John did have to pay attention when First *Gendarme* Penailillo was in charge of 118, as was the case on November 15, 2020. Once again, he was happy to see John, and smiley. But then he outright asked John to buy him some cigarettes. What could John say? When Sergio came around for kiosk orders, John asked for juice, lemonade, chocolate, and up to 3,000 pesos in cigarettes for the friendly *paco*. He came back without the lemonade (which was out of stock evidently) and said he had spent that money (another 3,000 pesos) on upgrading to Lucky Strike cigarettes, which cost nearly double other brands, since the *paco* would not smoke other cigarettes. John lost. He wondered if this required bribe was going to be perpetual. He had Manuel to thank for starting out with the bribe business to begin with. In addition, Penailillo liked asking John if he thought that either Mauricio or Manuel missed him, laughing as he did so.

John had also pointed out mouse sightings near the Virgin Mary shrine on the *patio* and another one in the dining room. Both Rubén and Miami saw the latter rodent scurrying along the wall but, like John, were feeling either too lazy or too captivated by the conversation to get after the critter and kill it. Apparently, it was not just with chess that "killer" John was losing his touch.

He gave out some free consulting, too, advising young Ricardo Lira how he might claim his Italian citizenship. His paternal great grandfather was an Italian citizen, so Ricardo qualified. As a pastime, Miami and John also talked a fair amount about settling in Italy. So, they imagined what Italy might be like through a sort of mental classroom. However, speaking of classes, neither Necúlman (incorrectly spelled Necusman in volume 1) nor Cisternas had asked John to continue with English lessons. Cisternas had only appeared once in the last week and Necúlman not at all. So, John kept up with his yard cleaning duties and others from the 118B contingent (like Alejandro) pitched in and helped. (Note: there had heretofore been some confusion about 118A including the upstairs portion of cells, which was actually confirmed to be 118B.)

John was trying to get some of them to understand that used toilet paper should be tossed in the toilet rather than on the side of the toilet. He explained that modern toilet paper dissolves quickly in water, but it was hard to teach an old dog new tricks. So, he had to keep pushing it across a wet floor then use a broom to push the muck into and dustpan and empty it into a trashcan. John did not live around people with much sophistication. Imagine that these kinds of men prepare *rancho* and *dieta*. It is no wonder that John got sick off it or that others saw the need to wash the raw grub coming out of the cooking barrels.

Back in his cell, John had to pay Aníbal 6,000 pesos to repair his sink that was loose on the wall and fix the grease pan that had fallen off the electric oven. Carlos had to fix a socket with a loose connection, too. All was done on the 15th. John asked Aníbal if he could get and install a normal toilet and find him a sharp steak and meat knife. His butter knife and plastic cutlery were simply not cutting it. Aníbal said he would work on it, but never did.

In the evenings, John tried to keep up with and (when possible) help out with planning for, and finding out the status of, his appeal. He also very much enjoyed resuming his teaching in the Historic Baptists Zoomcast on Thursdays and Sundays, along with Valentín Navarrete. For the moment, life in terrestrial hell was better than normal. Still, his friend Álvaro thought keeping John locked up for eighteen to nineteen hours was inhumane, if not a violation of human rights. Leftist justice had shown its true colors.

Smiley Penailillo was back running 118 on November 18, 2020, but he did not ask John for more cigarettes. He did advise, however, that Cabo Necúlman had dropped by to say that he would be coming at 3 p.m. for English lessons, which turned out to be true. He was a good student, doing his homework and looking up vocabulary words. He really tried hard to pronounce well and seemed to grasp verb tenses and other grammar items. "I have to take advantage of a native speaker being here," he said, noting that he planned to be in class for the next seven days straight. He also said that he would be bringing some of the grocery store items John requested. (John had received no compensation whatsoever for the first five hours of instruction.) John added to the list multivitamins, eyeglass cleaning spray, and soy sauce (none of which were normally allowed in during visitation or through either *encomienda* or the service window). Penailillo even attended for a few minutes here and there but did not muster either the dedication or interest to keep him. John subtly remarked that English institutes would charge clients 20,000 pesos per hour (paying him 14,000 pesos of it) for a native-speaking-Ph.D. teacher like him, and that he used to teach banking and mining company executives in their offices in Santiago in 1996 under such terms. Thus, he implied that Necúlman was getting a really special deal indeed! Of course, the main thing John wanted was to be left in 118, in his cell alone, and in peace, earning

a “very good” conduct score without having the rigors of yard cleaning thrust upon him. The newcomers in 118A were filthy rabble, by and large, and John hardly looked forward to cleaning up after them. In addition to thus raising his quality of life in terrestrial hell a notch, if he could also get some other items from the store that he was deprived of—especially those things that would relieve the burden of Pamela and others—he would be quite pleased. The next day, he brought John a little bottle of soy sauce, BBQ sauce, canned pineapple, and a chunk of blue cheese.

Before class, John noticed that his pillow was quite wet. Was he going to have to spend eighteen hours a day with gray water (or worse) dripping on his head? Examining the ceiling, he found a drip. He notified Miami who in turn told him to tell Penailillo, who upon seeing the drip, asked *mozo* Aníbal to take a look. He did so and found a leak in the hallway plumbing service closet on the floor above, which he promptly tied off. Then he peeled the stucco and paint off of the fissure above John’s bunk and said, “It will keep dripping until it dries up above but it will subside now that the paint has been scraped away.” John was happy and swept up the mess, brushing the debris off his damp bed and anywhere else he could find it had fallen. When he got back from teaching, however, the bed was even wetter and the drip still continued. “Another day in paradise,” he mused, as he put a plastic food container next to his head to catch the drops while he napped. Four hours later he awoke and, after putting his dinner into the little electric oven, he stretched out a plastic bag across the bedposts a meter above his face to catch the drops. Hopefully Aníbal would fix the problem the next day without severe inconvenience or making John change cells. After finishing, Aníbal had asked John how much Penailillo said he should be paid. He was unhappy when John told him, “He said nothing to me about it.” The cell door was then locked. The next day, Aníbal took down the plastic bags and made a plastic cover with wooden brackets that would catch and spill out any drops onto the wall. He charged 10,000 pesos, which was fairly expensive. Still, at least the work got done.

John has lost a couple and won a couple chess games the day before, but swept four straight from Rubén on that day. Ismael was not playing much now, and the chance of evangelical services had dropped to zero, as he and Aaron were both working outside 118, perhaps as soon-to-be *mozos*. Rubén was fascinated by John’s life story as he inquired and listened in the dining room. The two were alone except for a few moments when Miami popped in—taking a break from his laundry duties. “You should write a book,” Rubén said, “an autobiography about how you were raised and the circumstances by which you came to Chile, found work, met the Chicago Boys, raised your kids, married Pamela, built your house, traveled the world, wrote books, ran consulting and other businesses, and so forth.” His wife had been telling him for years to do the same.

Speaking of publishing his books and stories, through his dear friend Valentín Navarrete’s initial contact, John had gotten in touch with a right-wing publisher in Santiago run by a lawyer who was a big fan of his. They struck up a deal to publish at least one of John’s books written while in prison. The young man’s name was Henry Boys Loeb, whose English was not bad, and he further offered to represent John *pro bono*, contact the Italian ambassador, raise support for printing (and perhaps other) costs, and contact Guillermo Améstica, Claudio Fierro, Miguel Schweitzer and any other members of his legal defense team, in order to find out how he might be of service. It was of great encouragement to John to have Henry aboard. Now if he could just get out of the place of his abode! For the time being, however, he just hoped to keep his head dry

and that the huge moth that the neighboring *reos* saw fly in through the cell door portal before class would not bore holes in his clothes.

John was delighted when always-thoughtful Marcelo stopped by and passed two small bananas through the portal in the cell door. John always sought to take a multivitamin daily, although they were generally not permitted into the prison. Sometimes Pamela could sneak some in between slices of bread. At other times, sometimes many weeks, John just had to do without and suffer the bodily consequences of vitamin and mineral deficiency. The *gendarme* nutrition bureaucrats or dieticians still prohibited giving him fruit or vegetables (oddly saying he would lose weight without them), beyond what was put into *rancho* or *dieta* slop (which John did not eat). Pamela gave John two peeled avocados, one medium-sized tomato, a bag of lettuce, a smaller bag of celery every Saturday, but that was all the vegetables he got for the entire week, and it usually ran out by Wednesday (unless some celery made it to Thursday). All that nutrition was great, especially with salad dressing added—albeit (disappointingly) none had been permitted through *gendarme* inspection of *encomienda* food bags during the last two weeks.

Speaking of food woes, Necúlman had been coming to English classes, most days, and one thing John had requested he bring him was canned pineapple slices. Trouble is, Necúlman got the kind of can that requires a can opener, which are prohibited in prison. Neither Miami nor Rubén had one. But John's next-door neighbor, José, who worked as a *ranchero mozo* and was thus never in 118's *patio*, borrowed a steak knife from Franco (John's other neighbor), punched a hole in the lid and then cut the can open. It was remarkable to watch and see, too, that the knife was undamaged. Now John could eat pineapple on his all-meat Papa John's pizza!

Unfortunately, food was not the only trouble John had. His untreated vision problem was worsening a little. He had to squint to read outside in the sunshine, with so many black dots and "floating" objects obscuring his vision. Something was also happening with his retinal red cones, since the black letters for some time appeared to be on a pink page even though it was white. John liked to read in the warm *patio* but was thus forced to stay inside, where he spent most of his outside-the-cell time trouncing chess opponents, with eight straight triumphs the day before and now another three with one odd loss (incurred only after he experimented with a new opening), wherein Rubén raised his arms, giggled, and ran into the yard telling everyone about his victory. The news was important since John had already handily beaten nearly all the newcomers to 118A, and had been undisputed champ of 118 for a year. Hence, no matter how one won, it was important that everyone knew that John was beatable and that Rubén, who had lost so many to John in recent days, had been the victor. John imagined the resume entry, "Beat John in 7% of the matches over a year wherein one hundred games of chess were played per month." Was that really a stellar achievement?

The only other consistent fluttering, clucking, and cooing on the *patio* emanated from those responsible for the increasingly whitening shelves and low overhead rafters of the open *bodega*, now infested with nasty pigeons. They probably found a kindred spirit with the likes of Rubén. John mainly ventured out there to wash his dishes, and to check on—then push out—any nasty graywater and used toilet paper settled on the floor of the shower and bathroom complex, which he was assigned to keep clean. He mentioned to Necúlman the day prior that he would still like to be relieved of that duty, but Necúlman had no way to control the yard duties when not in charge of 118. John had hoped that he would talk to his colleagues and resolve the matter.

Alejandro and one other 118A *machucado* or prisoner did say that they would help push the stinky water out and spread it over the concrete where it would dry, and sometimes did, but if they failed in their duty John would be blamed and his conduct score reduced.

Given Rubén's obnoxious behavior, John questioned the wisdom of continuing to share with Rubén a little pizza and golden potato slices that Pamela and Nadia (Jana) sent him on Saturday. He had no problem giving Miami a share, who loved to talk with John about mutual travel experiences in Europe and to gorgeous southern Chile, as well as talk about some of the Spanish-language books dealing with economics and public policy that both had read. (Nadia got them from John's library at home.) Miami had also been asking John for tips on how to write his autobiography. So he merited pizza and special potatoes, not to mention John's homemade *quesadillas* with meat chunks, sprinkled with garlic and onion powder, where Rubén had only a questionable claim. Nonetheless, John was always generous with his food *de la calle* (from the street). Ricardo ate much if not most of his Doritos chips. Delfín, Franco, Carlos, Jorge, Rubén, Aarón, Sergio, Daniel, and Ismael got bits of gummy candy or taffy from him now and then if not somewhat regularly. Aaron often got a half of one of John's homemade sandwiches and, along with Ismael, enjoyed eating his BBQ potato chips and Toddy chocolate chip cookies. A few of them shared some of their goodies with John (like Jorge sharing something akin to square animal crackers). John further rewarded people like José with a pineapple slice (after he opened the aforementioned can) or Carlos with candies (after lending John his dustpan to pick up the ceiling debris swept into the hall after Aníbal had made such a mess of things).

Food distribution was not the only thing subject to adjustment. John's British friend Matt Merricks had tried to help him diagnose and fix the noxious drip problem overhead via text messages and links, but the problem ultimately was beyond John's control since it originated from outside his cell and the *gendarmes* only rarely ever spent any money on building maintenance. They preferred to use *reos* slave labor to fix or build things, or let people like John pay others like Aníbal to resolve issues. That was never more apparent to John when he saw the bottom halves of three-liter pop bottles hung over pipes, along with gray-water or sewage drainage terminals, to catch drips and more substantial leaks. Raúl (the younger, drug trafficker) was the *mozo* in charge of emptying what was collected in each bottle bottom each day from every plumbing closet (lodged between two cells, making the total number of such closets equal to half the number of cells in 118). In the end, John confirmed that, "Money answers everything" (Ecclesiastes 10:19).

John also was asked for loans now and then, which he would give on occasion—even though he knew the odds of being repaid were low. Sergio had never paid back the 5,000 pesos he borrowed earlier in the year and John was half expecting the same when he recently asked for an overnight loan of another 10,000 pesos. Yet he repaid it. Sergio had been getting more tips from people on food purchases now that no *gendarme* was indirectly padding his own pockets through food sales and kiosk runs like *suboficial mayor* González used to do. So Sergio was becoming a little capitalist, even giving John cash and imploring him to ask his wife to transfer it to his friend Jenny on the outside. He was working commission-based deals (although he denied being paid directly) to bring in cell phones and accessories through a *paco* he knew, and he proudly announced to John that he now had a *paco* source who would only charge 10% commission (instead of the usual 20%) to bring in cash. That meant increased opportunity, which was always good. Congruently, John was a little encouraged when Necúlmán said that he did not have to

return the chair to Sergio's daily waiting area—after he had finished teaching Necúlman English in the adjacent office—as Sergio had ordered a few days earlier. Little things matter in prison, but at least Sergio could not get on John's case again about the chair.

John was generally well-liked in 118. He lent his recently arrived book by Alberto Benegas Lynch, *El Juicio Crítico Como Progreso*, for a short period while he finished up the last hundred pages of Thomas Sowell's excellent book, *Migrations and Cultures: A World View*, wherein were provided insightful and fascinating details of resourceful Germans, Italians, Jews, Chinese, Indians, and Japanese moving about the globe through the centuries. Even if he lost out sometimes, John saw little downside to being generous with fellow inmates and teaching (or offering to teach) English to *gendarmes* at little or no cost. He also hired the services of Carlos and Aníbal on occasion, paying them well (in prison terms). As a result, he had no trouble with either *gendarmes* or *reos* (inmates) in his daily life of reading, Italian language study, walking, and chess playing out in the yard, or his eighteen hours of daily solitary confinement wherein he got to write, teach during the Historic Baptist Zoomcasts, make his own food, sing hymns, and keep in touch with the outside world. He hoped the amicable arrangement would last. What he really lacked and needed was for someone to bring him an Italian self-study book or two, a new pair of size 12½ or 13 sneakers, and some blue cheese salad dressing. (Shoes, of course, were hard to bring in. Like prescription glasses, they had to be worn-in by a visitor and swapped with John at the table.) But the point was moot since visitation had yet to start again due to the ongoing Coronavirus quarantine. And any Chilean visitor would likely have smaller feet than John's, yet have to walk an uncomfortably long way in oversized shoes up from the parking area to the visitor's entrance.

John just had to satisfy his cravings for blue cheese dressing food item. Tomatoes, for instance, were never the same with just oil and vinegar. In the meantime, John hoped his pharmaceuticals would pass the nurse's inspection and arrive soon. He was quite sure his health, and especially his otherwise high blood pressure and hormonal problems, would be worse without them. Only once had the *pacos* lost or stolen them. So the odds were good that he would receive them soon. He was relieved, too, that his wife had gotten most of her examinations done that the doctor had ordered many weeks ago, desiring to discard uterine cancer. Nevertheless, an incarcerated man never lacked for something to worry about.

Many dozens of dead or dying brownish-gray gnats (*mosquitos*) fell onto John's pants, light jacket, and shirt as he brushed them out of his hair with his hand. Maybe they were attracted in copious quantities to his mostly short gray hair and sun-soaked scalp as he basked in the sunshine. The whole battle was quite annoying, but John tried to put up with the bugs in order to get some more vitamin D into his system. He noticed, too, that his forearms were full of those little white splotches that old people get, which may or may not be attributable to vitamin deficiencies. He used to have just a few pale spots but now there were many. Jana's (Nadia's) efforts the prior week had just gotten a bottle of sixty multivitamins through the *gendarme* public window, coupled with his regular medications. However, John's vitamin and mineral deficiency (due to lack of vegetables and fruit in his diet) was taking its toll on his body. "Maybe the deficiency made him taste better to insects?," he wondered. He was reminded of just how bug-filled 118 is; like a bad camping trip in terrestrial hell that never comes to an end, there was always something disagreeable to put up with. At any rate, it was the Lord's Day, and John had a solo worship service and afterwards sat on the *patio* observing the other *reos* while reading his

book.

Jorge, a man in his 30s imprisoned for firing at the *carabineros* (police officers)—who in turn blew off two-thirds of his lower-right leg with a shotgun, leaving a stub below the knee,—hobbled on crutches but also sat, socialized, and ate with some *machucados*. One of them was just staying one night in 118A before being set at liberty. Two others were Ricardo and Moroni, giggling and captivated by the conversation conducted entirely in *coa* (prison dialect) or *flaite* (low-class) varieties of Chilean Spanish. The lead conversationalist was a *ranchero mozo* nicknamed Marino, who did all the *coa* arm gestures (with index fingers pointing as he bantered and babbled).

He was one of the men who saw how “nice” John’s cell was and wanted to move in with him, to which John politely replied, “No, I prefer to live alone.” He would have to be far worse than Rufo (who was quarantined with John in 109) in terms of conduct and do far less in terms of service in the cell. John did not want to put up with a *flaite* cellmate if he could help it, and seeing him carrying on under the *bodega* was enough to remind him why.

Aníbal, especially, as well as Ismael, Carlos, and Aaron, seemed to be mildly amused by the conversation as they cut to length many boards recycled from crates dropped off in 118, removing any nails prior to applying the circular saw. The boards were going to be used for shelving somewhere, according to Miami. Ruben swept up the sawdust the next day. Besides such events, Sunday was a quiet day in 118, with all the upstairs residents of 118A off on their Sunday-out (*dominical*) benefit at home. Everyone from 118/A/B did their cleaning duties and had breakfast.

Woven around Monday’s chess matches, John (and sometimes Ismael) read a book, while Miami, Rubén, Delfín, and a couple of the 118A newcomers played poker, with near-toothless, gray-haired Daniel watching from his crutches. Ismael worked out with makeshift weights, too, pausing to play chess with John (whose 118 record had improved to 1,199-91-19). Earlier he had asked, like usual, to borrow John’s plastic knife in order to spread margarine on his breakfast bread. He already had secured a permanent loan of John’s covered plastic bin passed daily to Sergio to hold some *dieta* slop for the day. That slop was actually John’s but he never ate it and had donated the grub to Ismael—a deal going on for many months.

To really rub it in, John shared his homemade turkey breast-cheese-avocado-tomato-lettuce-mayonnaise-BBQ sauce on wheat sandwich with Ismael and Miami, who thought it was delicious. Indeed, everyone who tried one of John’s creations was impressed with his sandwich-making capabilities.

Some surprise paperwork had come through for Miami, who now thought he might actually be paroled in April 2021. Mujica and Edwin (from 118A) had just recently been paroled, too. John also passed around some gummy candies and taffy to grateful Delfín, Daniel, Ismael, and Rubén. Luchito was out there, too, making an unusual appearance in order to hang his laundry. So did Moroni, who never changed out of his pajamas all day.

John’s left shoulder pain continued and he wondered if it would ever end. He doubted it would so long as he was confined to his cell with its horrid, narrow bed. At least the gray water

dripping was no longer a problem, and the plastic contraption rigged up by Aníbal seemed to be doing the trick. John never ceased to wonder how these *reos* had come up with all their inventions.

Speaking of surprises, Castro showed up on Monday to run 118. John, nervously, quickly hid his cell phone where he hoped that Castro could not find it. One could not be too careful when Castro was around. Yet he did not meddle much, for which John was quite thankful, and only appeared once on the *patio* after the lineup and roll call. He commented on John and Ismael's chess game then left the dining area. Later, after ordering the *reos* upstairs to the cells, he came to John's cell and, almost affectionately, called him (unusually) by his first name. He did not barge through the curtain but waited for John to give the go-ahead to enter, which was also shocking. He then said, "Do you have any mayonnaise?" Pamela kept John well-supplied, so he did the biblical thing and blessed his arch-enemy with what he asked for. John figured it was a resource well-spent anyway, so long as it would get the evil Castro off his back.

But things got even odder after that. John went down the four flights of stairs to retrieve the Kraft mayonnaise. He was inside, making more of his delectable aforementioned sandwiches for lunch the next day. Castro then started grilling John about what cellblock he would be staying in and what he planned to do now that he was convicted. John told him he was sure he would be in 118 and that he planned to teach the *gendarmes* English if the Supreme Court did not facilitate him going to home arrest or acquit him in January 2021. He would also continue to read books and play chess. Castro asked him about the company John ran and how he made his living, to which John replied: consulting, editing, teaching English, building, writing books, among other things.

He then asked if John would help him run his new small business selling printed shirts for dog lovers, and patenting his "wurk" brand. He said he would bring the design applicator press to the prison and John could embellish the shirts and other clothing items for him. He wanted an older, reliable man with experience to do the work. He thought Pamela might even put up a little capital for the project. Obviously, John was surprised, and told Castro that he would not be the best man to run his press (Castro then said that Miami might be), since he was a professional and relied on his head and knowledge to make a living, rather than working with his hands. He could manage the startup, however, and help write text for a website, plus secure a patent on the product or logo.

As he was speaking and listening to Castro, John thought, "Why would I even consider doing something for the man who abused me, stole my cell phones from me, and tried to kill me by leaving me exposed to the elements for hours while sick with a fever?" Then John realized that few *reos* had his skillset, and that other *gendarmes*, too, probably had their eyes on him as a useful quasi-slave-wage or low-paid labor candidate. Castro was certainly looking to benefit from John's knowledge and experience or expertise, rather than doing him a favor. Moreover, it seemed that some slaves were better than others after all, since Castro had not made the same offer to Sergio, Aníbal, Carlos, Aarón, or other *paco* sycophants in 118. "Employment in terrestrial hell: was it worth it? Would it bring me greater security and benefits while incarcerated? Would Castro do worse things to me if I decline?" Those were the questions that crossed John's mind.

Chapter II The Blood of the Innocents—Men of Corrupt Minds

“What’s a little blood dripping from the penis matter anyway?,” thought John on November 26, 2020.“Even if it were important or serious the prison infirmary has no urologist, and fat chance they are going to take me to the public hospital to get it checked out.” He figured that if they could care less about his eyes and failing vision the last thing they were going to care about was his penis, kidneys, bladder, etc. Trying to hold in his pee, he probably just squeezed it too hard anyway while crouched on the cell toilet made for midgets, stuck under the sink. “The bleeding might stop on its own,” he figured. Time would tell. Pamela, his son David, and his lawyer Guillermo were worried. Normal people would just go see their doctor. Maybe it was a pressure injury or maybe it was bladder cancer or a kidney problem. (John’s left kidney had been operated on twice before, the first time when a benign cyst cast darker blood into his urine. This time bright red drops came out.)

At any rate, the incident gave everyone pause as they once again realized the plight of the quasi-enslaved, beleaguered inmates in Chilean prisons, which most of the prison medical staff could care less about, and judges cared about even less. Terrestrial hell is supposed to torture people and damage their health. That’s why the diarrhea-generating food was so bad and exercise opportunities so slim. John’s ailing eyesight had not improved and his biting left shoulder pain had become chronic. Yet, no one with power in prison cared.

All the *gendarmes* wanted was that John be able to teach some of them English and to clean the stagnant graywater out of the *patio* bathroom and showers. Sycophant mozo Aníbal made a snide remark to Rubén, who was sweeping up the tissues and trash the *reos* had chucked out their cell windows the night before, that the one in charge of sweeping the yard should be doing that job. He meant John. Yet others were allowed to “cooperate” and sweep it, too. “So what was the big problem?,” John remarked to Rubén. It was just Aníbal’s way to pester John and threaten to pass along a bad briefing to the *gendarme* in charge (likely Cisternas) when grading his conduct.

The rest of the *machucados* tended to like John since he shared food and candy with them out on the *patio*. In fact, the next day he invited Miami and Rubén to eat some of Pamela’s succulent pork loin, rice, and golden potato slices for lunch. Miami would reheat them and John and Rubén would bring condiments. John also taught people to play chess, and some even had the occasional joy of beating him. His record stood at 1,219-94-20. He ended up being an encouragement for Miami and Ismael to read more, too, and some others found out that they liked to listen about what the other *reos* had learned from books. Moreover, John occasionally employed Carlos and Aníbal as well, and gave Sergio tips from time to time. He had stories to tell from living in the United States, something most *machucados* salivated over, as well as traveling the world.

But with all the new chess players in 118A, who could not beat the largely-John-trained cast in 118, the main thing that *pacos* and *machucados* admired about John was his chess dominance. John thought,“Any guy sitting at a chess table in Central Park willing to bet a hundred bucks on a game could trounce me. These *reos* have no idea what good chess players are like.”

There was some real good news in John ’s life, too. His son David had a serious Baptist

girlfriend, Jordan, a fifthgrade school teacher who was born in Germany and raised an army brat, moving every couple years. They called and talked to John, which was thrilling in and of itself for him (or any prisoner for that matter). Of course, the main thing on John's mind was that his favorite son was on the brink of producing him some more grandchildren! She seemed like such a nice gal; a typically pretty, happy, slightly chubby American girl from what he heard and the photograph he saw—ready and willing to produce four or five little creatures once the marital vows were taken. But that was David's call. Dear old Dad just had to wait and see. The fact that she was a Baptist made all the difference in the world. His daughter Grace had married a Baptist, but then they defected, becoming Orthodox Presbyterians, and had, to John's chagrin, his first two grandsons sprinkled. John knew that a DavidJordan pact would not produce such wayward results, which really brightened his day! (He loved Grace and Joseph of course. No one's perfect, and they were faithful Christians even if not Baptists anymore.)

There was also positive news from the Supreme Court of Chile, which had agreed to hear Guillermo and Claudio's appeal in order to lessen the charges against John and nullify the original, biased trial. All *reos* and *pacos* who heard it were glad, except for crafty Castro, who was eyeing John's human capital in order to grow his business, thus hoping for a long prison term. Ex-lawyer Fabiola and other lawyers helping John (Henry, Pablo, Miguel, David) were pleased, too. The liars amongst the prosecution and overt leftists and communists, not to mention informed non-libertarian anti-Christians, were the only ones left unhappy. Thinking of those adversaries, John recalled the biblical proverb, "The Lord has made all things for Himself, yes, even the wicked for the day of doom" (Proverbs 16:4). He also had some optimism about the two books he had written while in 118, including the first volume of *Bearing the Cross* and his evangelical treatise *Suffering Unjustly*. He had several friends and supporters getting text, cover, translation, and indices ready, and a few outlets to publish them in both English and Spanish. He had even spoken to folks interested in funding the printing costs. Things were hopping outside his terrestrial hell.

Pamela had missed yet another medical appointment because Jana was unable to start the pickup truck. Both things weighed on John. So did the fact that she was tired of taking care of the building exterior and grounds all by herself; even when Jana pitched in, doing so was a chore. Both of them dutifully brought John his weekly food, toiletries, monthly medications, and books to read. John was reading Leviticus and Numbers, the last two books of the Bible he had yet to read since being imprisoned. He had been reading the Bible a little each day, along with twenty other books. He needed more books since Ismael had been reading—and much enjoying—the most recent arrival, *El Juicio Crítico Como Progreso*. John did not want to take it away from him. If he couldn't make him a better Christian, John at least thought he could make him a libertarian. Being nice and generous probably never hurt anyone, and John wanted to achieve greater peace and some stability while awaiting the Supreme Court verdict several weeks ahead. His untreated health problems were enough to keep him occupied, although he was glad to see no visible blood in his afternoon urine.

No further signs of blood were seen the next day either. Yet, Pamela not only worried about John's health, she also had some concerns about repercussions from identifying and pointing out "corruption" within the ranks of the *gendarmes*. Nevertheless, "There was no reason to be concerned," John explained. Corruption is only considered bad when we believe that goodness, virtue, or benefit are compromised by certain actions that have been deemed evil, bad,

unrighteous, or damaging. But why is it wrong to bring prisoners food, cash, small appliances, or electronic devices? There is nothing immoral or inherently bad about them. In fact, a market exists for the *reos* buying them and the *pacos* selling such goods to prisoners wherein both *pacos* and *machucados* find themselves better off, after completing transactions for such goods. Making the sale and even the use of those goods off limits only tends to raise prices and create windfall profits for the guards—in the same way that monopolists garner greater profits by restricting entry into a market.

John stated, “We call corruption what is really just an informal market transaction that is arbitrarily prohibited by prison authorities.” To eliminate the “problem,” the arbitrary (and capricious) rules need to be relaxed, allowing guards to sell whatever they like (even if drugs and booze are excluded) to inmates, and thus create competition between guards. Each *paco* undercuts the prices charged by his fellow guards in order to get the business. In the end, the consumer, that is, the prisoner in this case, pays less to satisfy his needs. Why is that so wrong? Prohibition allows the guards to charge more and thus they prefer to keep up the corruption rhetoric that serves to pad their own pockets. “Therefore,” John concluded, “rhetoric aside, the only bad or immoral behavior in this scenario is seen in forcing hapless and often poor inmates to pay more in order to get what they need.” Corruption is hardly a *real* ethical violation and prisoners would be far worse off if it were not practiced or available. To practice corruption is to practice virtue when there is a free market for trading the goods sold.

The same principle extends to *pacos* who offer private prison cells (wherein a *reo* may live alone) and other infrastructure benefits to those who pay them, directly or indirectly. Clearly, there is a property right issue to be considered, since *gendarmería* as part of the state (not the *paco* in charge) owns the cells and infrastructure in question. However, the *paco* in charge is granted wide discretionary authority over those goods and it is reasonable that he will sell privileges when he can get away with it, assuming a willing buyer exists. The same holds true for people paying for the privilege of entering a *CET* (halfway house). The solution to such private arrangements is to declare such privileges as being permissible goods and sell them to the highest bidder, allowing as many *pacos* who want to sell them to do so. Once again, competition will lower prices and resources will be allocated to their highest-valued use. Obligating everyone to accept a moralistic paradigm wherein segments of the market within the prison must be cut off is astonishingly self-serving on the part of the *gendarme* beneficiaries and makes little sense. There is no true equality in prison, and those who can pay more in order to live better ought to be able to do so.

Moreover, whenever John mentioned that a guard was corrupt, he did so simply to identify one or more guards as a man or men who were willing to break the rules and, for a premium, meet the needs of so many *reos*. Accordingly, John was happy that so many *gendarmes* were “corrupt.” The free market was alive and well in prison through their labors, even if their actions were trounced by proactive public policy prescriptions, pseudo morality, or internal prison rules.

The *gendarmes’* food and kiosk suppliers had no difficulty relying on the market for other things. Whenever a truck pulled in, filled with boxes of beverages, meats and cheeses, cookies, etc. destined for the kiosks, there was so much to unload and carry a long distance that the suppliers relied on *machucados* to do the heavy lifting and carrying, paying them 10,000 pesos for their time. For *reos* without visitors that was welcome income. Ismael, Carlos, and others took

advantage of it. Company supply trucks typically showed up twice a month.

John, however, preferred to spend his time reading, playing chess, or writing books, ensuring that he never broke a sweat and could wear the same pants seven days straight and the same shirt at least three days in a row. Of course he did do his walking, stretching, and brief exercising in the cool of the morning. That was his only rigor for the day other than smashing many flies that lit on the dining room table next to his plastic armchair and chess set. The term *mosquear* (to become fly-ridden) was invented and used by *reos* to describe why food had to be kept hermetically sealed whenever possible while out on the tables. “I bet there will be flies in hell, too,” John pondered, “they are such pests.” Then he remembered that, terrestrially speaking, that was precisely where he had been for more than a year.

At least the devilish Castro did not pester John whatsoever when back in charge of 118 on November 28th. That day was relatively uneventful, other than the fact that Miguel Schweitzer and his partner Matías Balmaceda were unable to reach an accord with John’s public defenders, Claudio Fierro in particular. John then reached out to Francisco Veloso (upon the recommendation of Chilean rightist leader of *La Diestra*, Francisco Bustos) and awaited a reply to see what he could do. It was in general a day off for John, although he received another short academic paper to edit from his German client Sara. He actually had time to watch something on Netflix, fast forwarding through certain parts he found objectionable. He even fell asleep two hours earlier than usual. Sometimes exhaustion has a way of catching up with a man, even when imprisoned. John tried to keep busy, and Saturday always was a full day, with *encomienda* arriving and food needing to be put away or sorted into plasticware and put into the community freezer. He shared a slice of pizza with Rubén and Miami, then, after winning seven straight games of chess against Rubén and Oliver (a thief in his 30s housed in 118A), lost a very interesting game to Ismael. Both Ismael and Rubén had been showing moments of brilliance in chess strategy, although still far from the general rule of their play, coming up with surprising victories.

As the game progressed John told both of them and Miami about how they fit in as characters in his new books, which fascinated them to no end. They liked their stardom, although Rubén started to look a little worried and pale. John remarked that, “Ismael starts out as a bad cop who murders his girlfriend, finds Jesus in prison (although he is not presently walking with the Lord), and then later reveals that she committed suicide, making him another innocent victim of Chilean injustice housed in 118.” Miami was a rather stalwart and kind of reliable character. Rubén was “the guy who learned to play chess well from John, mainly, and was worried about his real name appearing (as did all sex offenders other than Miami). John assured him that only the last names of those who granted John permission to use them would be noted in the story, and innocent people had no shame in being identified. Indeed, just the opposite was true. Curiously, Sergio, Rubén, and others condemned for sex abuse were reluctant to be identified, although all claimed innocence. John did not have to bother asking Mauricio and Aaron, who showed signs of uneasiness about their real names appearing.

The next day, Rubén made it clear that he did not want anyone to know he was in prison and that he was prepared to sue John if his book revealed that fact. “Only your first name is used,” said John, who genuinely did not want to divulge anyone’s identity without their consent. Several men wanted to be identified and gave John permission to use their full names. But Rubén figured

that there were no other retired men going by his name within his public service unit and, therefore, people would figure out his carefully guarded secret. Only his closest of family knew he was in jail; all other friends and acquaintances believed he was touring a foreign country as an unmarried retiree. So John, even though he doubted that in the whole country there were no other Rubéns retired from the same service, made sure to remove any specific job description or unit from the books. Rubén was reduced to being just some public employee. That action removed all tension and complaints from Rubén. John further asked him how he thought that dozens of people who had met him in 118 would keep his secret? He replied, "They are criminals and run in a different social class than me, with a different circle of friends." But some like John and Miami were not so classified; even Ismael, Helmut, Mauricio, José, Waldo, Pato, and Raúl (the elder) were in a non-criminal class, even if they were guilty of one error in their lives. Thus, John considered Rubén's hope for secrecy to be preposterous, even if he doubted that people, once freed, would go out of their way to talk about Rubén being in jail.

John also annoyed other people a little bit at times. It was not his hymn singing, which he did at least once every day for over a year from his cell (and sometimes on the *patio*), except maybe when he was so sick with Covid-19 and pneumonia last winter. It was not his religious services on Wednesdays and Sundays either, now largely suspended for lack of adherents. What really bugged sickly, drug kingpin Moroni was John reading Italian verbs and sentences out loud in the dining room. Nobody else cared. Rubén, Miami, Ricardo, and Ismael actually found it somewhat interesting, trying to figure out what the phrases might mean. Not so for Moroni, who was not intelligent enough to even imagine what learning a new language entailed. So John simply stopped practicing when Moroni was around in order to avoid conflict. He also did not complain to Moroni about having to listen to his senseless *flaite* or *coa* slang talk about soccer or different foods he liked, which were about the deepest conversations Moroni could handle.

Speaking of food, like many others, John was growing weary of the same pre-packaged breakfast snacks given out with the keg of morning tea or Nescafé (neither of which John drank): NutraBien brownies, Colun run-of-the-mill cheese slices and cheap yogurts, PF sliced ham (low-class lunch meats), Regimel cheap and runny jam, and Quaker or Costa cereal bars. If he got out of jail before the Lord took him, he would never touch those brands or varieties again! Granted, the *rancho* and *dieta* slave-slop was worse, but that did not make the repetitive packaged snacks any good. After a year, any man would become a fussy eater. No fruits and vegetables for John but loads of sugary snacks and carbohydrates. One thing John was not finicky about, however, was who was white when playing chess. He won nine straight on November 29th, smoking Rubén seven times and barely beating Ismael twice on errors when he should have lost both. Carlos stopped playing chess with John months ago, but he did sew John's Chinese watch band back together for the third time (for a thousand pesos). Now John was again able to track when it was time to unpack his sandwich and chips he made the night before, or when it was time to read the new book that had arrived via his wife, written by Danish professor Bjørn Lomborg, *The Skeptical Environmentalist: Measuring the Real State of the World*. It would serve to reinforce John's present conviction that radical ecology dogma was bogus.

To keep well hydrated while reading, especially after thirty to forty minutes sitting in the sun, he sent Sergio to the kiosk with six thousand pesos, who brought him back 4.8 liters of lemon-spiked Más-brand water and three liters of sugar-and-Sucralose-spiked Valle orange and pineapple juice. Together with what was left of the sugary three-liter Sprite that Pamela brought

via *encomienda* on Saturday, much of which was used to wash down Papa John's pizza over the weekend, John was once again assured not to have to consume the rat-contaminated well water. What more could a sexless, condemned married man ask for?

"You have not trained Rubén well, John; he has an unsportsmanlike attitude when he plays chess," complained Oliver. He did not like Rubén's laughing and boasting, acting out and strutting about when he won, or his condescending attitude toward his non-John opponents. Of course, John had seen the same thing. But humility and graciousness are things one learns as a child, not at age 59. Pretty hard to blame John for not doing what Rubén's mother or father should have done. In terms of his own example to Rubén, John beat everyone 92% of the time and yet never gloated in any victory, just nodding and giving a smile to his latest "victims" and treating them with respect. Rubén never learned any of that. On the contrary, he had been overheard proclaiming to John that he was number two in 118, after John of course, causing Ismael to mutter his disagreement to John. Ismael was a gracious and humble chess player who did not act like Rubén. He had some odd theoretical ideas about being better because he tried not to exchange pieces much, checkmating with as many of his original pieces as possible. John tried to tell him that the objective of chess is getting one's opponent in checkmate, regardless of method of style. In fact, style points were basically irrelevant. But Ismael and Carlos were headstrong in their dogma. Aside from all such bantering, Oliver declared John to be the best chess player in the entire 3,000-man Valparaíso penitentiary. "How do you know that?," replied John, "Have you seen all the others play?" Oliver said he had seen many others from various *módulos* and insisted that John was the best. Still, John had doubts about rushing to update his resume.

Miami gave John an old banana, perhaps as a reward for being crowned champ. Yet John was too finicky to eat the "rotten" (bruised) spots at the lower third and would have thrown it out had Ismael intervened and gobbled it down. Fruit was too valuable a commodity in prison to simply chuck out. Ismael had no problem eating the remnants of others' food. At lunchtime John shared a half sandwich with him, and mayonnaise and avocado bits dropped onto Rubén's occasionally washed table cloth. Ismael whisked the drips onto his finger and ate them up, regardless of flies or whatever else having set foot there before. Miami also took advantage of the ensuing conversation about colorful past and present *reos* in 118, notably *Che* who, he said, was constantly mooching cash off him to buy cigarettes, perhaps ten times per week. He said, "Don't do yourself the double dishonor of asking me for a loan when you have no intention of paying it back. Here, take it as a gift instead." It was probably safe to say that few if any in 118 missed a *doméstico* and *perkins* like *Che*. John recalled many times that he annihilated *Che* in chess, and how he had mooched cigarette money off him and Ismael, too. He was a sad and miserable character, despite being a bodybuilder. By the way, it was the last day of November and John's chess record stood at 1,246-98-20, which included many wins over *Che*.

In other news, visitation resumption was still nowhere in sight, nor were John's English students. His eyesight defects and shoulder problems remained unchecked. The wheels of his upcoming Supreme Court case still ground slowly on, as did work on getting his books finished and published. John finally made initial contact with another rightist private lawyer, Francisco Veloso, through his colleague Rufino Martínez. They studied the case thoroughly but decided not to take it since it was at such a late stage and Claudio Fierro and Guillermo Améstica had done such a good job preparing the appeal. Rufino thought it quite possible that John's sentence

would be reduced. Pamela was sure that communist-ridden Chile no longer had a viable or bright future and worked hard at getting her documents together to claim her Italian citizenship by marriage, while musing over how to sell things (with the help of others) prior to a likely international move in 2021 or 2022. Once again, there was never a dull moment in John's life.

Chapter III One Will Be Taken and the Other Left

Yesterday an apple, today a pear; the first two days of December were shaping up well thanks to Miami's generosity with fruit. Still, John maintained his multivitamin supplements. The little scabby cracks on the edges of his mouth had disappeared since he started taking them and he was again doing fine on five hours of sleep (on average). His brain seemed to be functioning better, too. He was on a roll in chess, demoralizing his opponents—although hardly ever saying a word to them that was not didactic in nature. He had won eighteen straight in the last three days, 27-1 over the last four, and 34-2 over the last five, trouncing victims Rubén (mainly), Oliver, Luís (45, serving nine years for robbery with violence, front teeth knocked out during his arrest, *ranchero mozo*), and Ismael (who garnered the only two victories against him). Ismael, wanting to put Rubén in his place, took three out of four against him in his quest to lay title to second best in 118. Rubén only learned to play a year ago, and had played John over nine hundred times during that period, while Ismael had learned to play twenty years ago and liked to study the different moves and openings, naming them as he saw them. When not playing chess, John continued to read the sharp criticisms of radical ecology and the ideas of its doomsayers, often sharing portions of his lunch and treats with everyone. Rubén proclaimed John's sandwiches as being better than he could buy in the store. Daniel, Delfín, Oliver, Jorge, Rubén, and others looked forward to their candy. Ismael would now only eat taffy since he said the gummy candies made him fat.

In between games, John had a chance to teach Miami about the thesis of William McNeill's famous 1976 book, *Plagues and Peoples*, where the state is shown to be a human-invented macro-predator. He also summarized some of his own research on fire safety done in Baltimore, Santiago, Turin, Lagos, New Delhi, and Valparaíso, highlighting the fact that state institutions and actors do not serve the public interest but rather private ones. Miami added some personal and Chilean stories about big Chilean businesses and rich folks being in cahoots with the state to secure favors or privileges that yielded exorbitant profits—what economists call *rent seeking*.

For his part, John was just glad to have peace without any hassles in 118. The dripping above his head was in the past and Miami said that they had just sealed up a wet spot on their floor that might have been the source of John's discomfort. Miami lived with Luchito (the friendly Pentecostal) on the floor above, one cell over, making the location of their floor wetness about three or four meters away from John's erstwhile ceiling drip problem. Hopefully the wastewater problems for both cells were history. The gnats outside, however, were not going away. They were so bad in fact that John could not sit outside and read, thus leaving him unable to produce some vitamin D with sunshine on his bare skin. Even standing over the *pesebre* (the wash basin that John called the manger) to wash dishes was unpleasant on account of the critters. They did not seem to bother brown-skinned Ismael though, whose gnatty *patio* weightlifting was noticeably paying off. He had a little gut now (probably from constantly eating John's *dieta* and candy or lunch bits), but his arms, chest, and shoulders were bulking up. He cut hair in the barber room next to the *pesebre* and evidently the bugs did not bother him, or he just chose to get used to them. John only stayed in that area long enough to drop off some taffy and gummy candy to Ismael and his client, Oliver. All the upstairs (118B) men were now working as *mozos* except Oliver and one other guy. Other than the mess they left for John in the bathroom-shower area, they were never seen on the *patio*.

Necúlman, however, did show up on December 2nd. John was in his pajamas dozing when Sergio opened his cell door to advise him to go down. He put on his light jacket and shoes and did so right away. Necúlman still had brought nothing for John from the store, who decided he would just work for free until he did so, perhaps garnering some intangible benefits in return for his English lessons. John wanted to keep focused on getting his books formatted, with final edits done along the way, translated, and published in both languages. The process was slow, but he had many volunteers: Dusan, Leónidas, Hermógenes, Jano, Paz, Valentín, Pamela, Elías, Steve, El Don (amigo de Jano), Henry, Álvaro, Joe, Bob, and a few others. In reality, he could not have written and nearly published two books in a year's time, not to mention working daily on a third one, without his fantastic team! The only real sad news of the day was that his microeconomics professor and dissertation advisor Walter Williams had passed away. He was a brilliant Negro economist, like his equally brilliant mentor Thomas Sowell.

December 3rd was a relatively slow day, with John sweeping two chess games apiece from Ismael and Rubén. The latter two continued their struggle for recognition as second-best, with Ismael taking two out of three games. Ismael boasted about his superior methods to teach how to play chess while playing it with his opponents and not just taking pieces or massacring them, merely in order to win like John did. John quipped that the conquered always have some excuse for why they lost, but it is hard to argue with success, adding that no one did more to teach others how to play in 118 than he did. Castro, who admired John's chess skill, was in charge of 118 that day but arrived late to let the *reos* out. Hence, only Miami went down early, cleaning up the yard and mopping the walkway and dining hall floor, too. When the others were finally sent down, they quickly got their cleaning duties done.

The rest of the morning started a bit rough, with Carlos confronting John on the *patio*: "I am no one's *perkins*; next time clean off the table yourself prior to teaching the *gendarme* English." John was taken aback a bit by this comment, especially coming from the guy using his backup cell phone for free every day and who had often been employed (and paid well) by John to fix or build and install things. John had not asked him to clean off the table in the rear lunchroom, which presumably was left filthy by Aníbal and Aaron after doing one of their wood projects. Necúlman had ordered Carlos to clean it off, noting that he had seen large rats atop it while working the night shift in 118.

Carlos did so reluctantly and the next day confronted John as if it was somehow his fault and demanded that John clean it off next time. The child rapist's anger was misplaced, since John had neither anything to do with messing up the table nor asking Carlos to clean it. Necúlman did not ask John to clean it off, perhaps because he felt a little guilty for taking advantage of John's professional services for very little compensation. Carlos made sure nearly everyone on the *patio* heard his short diatribe, too. John said that he had no problem cleaning off the table and would have done so if asked. But he was not asked, as Carlos agreed, and John had nothing to do with Necúlman's decision to requisition Carlos. John also asked Carlos, in Aníbal's presence, "Who made the mess in the first place and did not clean it up?" He saw no reason why he should be obligated to clean up after other people, and noting, too, that he was in the habit of cleaning up after himself and not expecting others to do so for him. Carlos just shrugged, even though he knew who the culprits were.

John thought, "I live with a bunch of lazy slobs." Over breakfast, Rubén concurred that John was

in the right but to offend the sycophants could be detrimental to his well-being. Miami, who had given John yet another small apple, said the best thing to do was to avoid conflict, asking him for the key to the dining hall instead and teaching at a table in there. John thought well of that idea. He would get the key from Miami before class and return it afterwards. But Necúlman did not show up so it was a moot point for that day.

Miami and Rubén both said that John got picked on a bit on account of others' envy and because he was a *gringo*. Miami added that, "They bug you, John, because you are a *good* man and they are not. You bother no one, do your chores, and behave generously with others. For reasons like that they detest you." It was John's goodness and willingness to be kind to or help people that made him a target of a few. It probably goes without saying that practicing his faith and demonstrating discipline in good habits like reading, worship, language study, and exercise did nothing to endear him to many common men in prison, even though one or two of his new fans (who had ridden down with him in chains to the courthouse) greeted him and waved from one of *módulo* 114's high-rises, whenever they looked down and saw him walking on 118's *patio*. Indeed, what John did (or how he behaved) probably made him more of a target than anything else, set up for everyone to see and just waiting to be picked off. "You also have money coming in and a good wife who stands by you," the two men counseled, "compared to many here who have nothing and no one."

John knew this fact to be true, and that his network of supporters was quite solid and faithful as well, to the chagrin of the communists and hard leftists who hoped he would be harmed far more while in prison. In short, it helped that John was mostly (if not wholly) innocent in the minds of his backers, who saw him as a political prisoner being unjustly punished by the Left. And the more people got to know John within the penitentiary, the more fans he got, notwithstanding the few envious mischief makers that arose with them. Oliver, who had lived in the 114 hellhole before coming to 118A, was surprised. "You have admirers even in 114 now," he said.

Rubén and Miami continued, "People like Karim are raised with golden eggs and opportunities and yet are attracted to criminal ways. Once in jail they are drawn to them and enjoy talking like criminals and making fun of others who are not like them." John could not imagine why anyone would want to be or act like a *flaite* criminal. Miami said he had been analyzing the situation for some time since John did nothing to offend anyone and yet there was always someone taking a shot at him or harming him, whether Manuel, Mauricio, Aníbal, or now Carlos. It is almost as if they have nothing better to do than to cause him some trouble, and that without provocation, almost like sport. At near the end of *patio* time, Castro appeared in the dining hall, took out his cell phone, and asked John to interpret what a buildyour-own website had to say. It was probably a good thing that none of the envious sycophants witnessed John's concise and clear answers to Castro, that would only further set him apart from them, along with all the other known things that he could do that were well beyond their reach.

Yet, they did not know the half of it. After being locked up (and especially at night) John was a productive writer and editor (recently finishing another small order from his German professor client), and a serious history and Bible teacher on the Historic Baptist Zoomcast twice a week, not to mention many hours spent on constructive chat or making group chat room commentaries, and taking advantage of reading and learning new things. Miami would bring him new ideas or actual cases that might help him with his own, and at night John would consult with his attorneys

about them, too. Who needed television? John was being remarkably productive and useful, despite his adversity. He thanked God for it. He also helped others when he could, like communicating with Miami to help him learn how to use WhatsApp, even including him in a three-way call with one of his bilingual supporters living in Texas (Bob) the night before. Some nights he was so busy formatting and getting his books ready to publish that he did not get to bed until 3 a.m., barely having a little time to catch up with his wife or to make sure she knew how much he loved her, or to encourage his son David in his big decision about whether to marry Jordan.

Prison was wreaking havoc on John's body for sure, but his mind, life, work, and ministry were kept on more than just life support. John shared these activities and successes with few *reos*, mainly just Miami, Rubén, and Ismael. The others would hardly be able to fathom what he was doing and if they could they would just become more envious. Miami was expanding his horizons and technological capacity lately and planned to ask a *paco* to bring him a mini SD memory card for his phone. John said he would like one, too, and Miami agreed to get one for him (but never did). Meanwhile, Doritos-loving Ricardo asked John if he could get his wife to bring him a big bag, and that he would pay him for it on Saturday. He represented that other group of men who had nothing against John and found him to be useful and perhaps even entertaining. John, as expected, complied with the request.

On December 4, 2020, quite by surprise, John got a new cellmate, Guillermo Mascaró González (59). He was transferred in from *módulo* 111, where he experienced torture by electric shock administered by several of his seven cellmates, and learned about many corrupt practices done by the *pacos*. He was eyewitness to the fact that some of the *gendarmes* were able to earn 290,000 pesos per month by providing extra services to the prisoners. For instance they would bring in many different kinds of drugs and would sell them at a profit wholesale and even help with retail sales. For between 400,000 and 500,000 pesos per month, those guards would be willing to guarantee traffickers not to meddle in their affairs. There were three traffickers that controlled his *módulo*, and all of them had their complements of *perros*, *pérkines*, and others who did services for the local drug lords, including providing defense and fighting against the other drug lords, along with dealing with other moneyed people like certain thieves.

Fighting was common in 111, and so were yelling threats, much like John experienced when he was quarantined in 109. The guards also took payments to look the other way when cellmates wanted to beat up a person, provided they did not stab him with a lance, a spear, or a knife, for 20,000 to 50,000 pesos. The guard would go upstairs and give them ten minutes to beat up somebody. If the *paco* took a cell phone he would give it back for a price of 40,000 pesos. The guards also would bring technology used to extort money from people outside.

Guillermo was absolutely elated with the tranquility he found in 118, and especially in John's cell where there was no television or loud radio. Like John, he preferred to read and to use his cell phone for legitimate purposes like acquiring information. He had read over sixty books during his eight months in 111 and was their librarian of a sort.

He was sent to prison eight months ago for contempt of court. He had twice violated a restraining order not to return to his million-dollar home in Cerro Placeres (Valparaíso). When his mother who was eighty-six died, he went back to tend to her body and reported the fact to the coroner

and police—after his brother-in-law simply let her lie there. That same brother-in-law absconded with the seventy-eight million pesos (USD 110,000) in her account and was using the house as if it was his. While attending to her corpse, the brother-in-law called the police and after Guillermo took care of the coroner business, the police arrested him. He was convicted and sentenced eighteen months in prison for doing that. He also violated the court order a second time and was awaiting sentencing of up to three years for that event. All told, he could be in jail for 4½ years for violating the restraining order.

Guillermo had three children but they had never come to visit him. One was a public hospital doctor earning four million pesos a month in Santiago. Another was a middle manager for Líder, the Walmart superstore chain in Chile. The youngest was studying business administration at the university. Still, they did help out financially somewhat, with the oldest child paying for the youngest's education. But they never came to see him or to leave any *encomienda* sacks.

Guillermo was from the Right, a supporter of the military government, and was a fan of John's—one of those who thought John would have done better to kill some of those leftist criminals in Reñaca. Miami said he would size him up for John the next day, but John was already content. Guillermo made no noise and was willing to cook and clean the cell in return for John sharing the goodies he received from Pamela. He was the head of the hostelry unit (hospitality) on a Chilean merchant marine ship that serviced southern Chilean ports, where he worked as chef, too.

Marcelo dropped by the cell on December 6th and John gave him two-thirds of a loaf of Castaño integral bread—after Marcelo brought him three apples. (It was not barter but rather a nice gesture to return the favor.) Marcelo was sentenced to ten years for being the driver in some larger crime. Hence, he was in *módulo* 102 before coming to 118 and confirmed all that Guillermo had said about life in the hellish general-population *módulos* and the activities of the *pacos*. He said the *pacos* were sometimes more criminal than the prisoners themselves.

For instance, the *pacos* always blamed visitors for bringing in drugs. Yet, after eight months without visitation due to the Coronavirus quarantine, drugs were as abundant as ever. Indeed, John had not heard about *machucados* in any *módulo* complaining that they could not get enough drugs or that the price of drugs had risen due to short supply. It was pretty obvious that the *pacos* were bringing them in since almost no one else could. Guillermo said that *suboficial mayor* Farías in 111 (recently retired mandatorily) had been trying to get special permission to come back as block chief because the drug money was so good. His replacement, *cabo primero* (first corporal) Cristián Cortés, was head of the syndicate and could not be fired even after he was caught with drugs. Like his predecessor, he made money from drugs, but also from selling food items, electronics, small appliances, cell phones, passes to return to their cells during *patio* time (5,000 pesos), and the other aforementioned items. Both might have been complicit in stealing the prescription medication destined for *reos* like Guillermo, selling them as downers for as much as 5,000 pesos per pill. John was shocked to hear it.

Sometimes the *pacos* could be mean or even cruel. Guillermo said that Cortés knew that a troubled inmate (the same seemingly demon-possessed kid that starred incessantly at John during the ride back from the courthouse in October 2020) would be raped, and a broom handle shoved up his anus, in disciplinary *módulo* 112. Yet, Cortés sent him there anyway. In that block, twelve

bad *machucados* were stuffed into a cell for up to twenty-four hours a day. There were only three bug-infested mattresses on the floor to share, and a nasty hole in which to urinate and defecate with a pair of small water fountains dribbling or spurting into the filthy thing. The *machucados* must fill their cups (to get a drink) from that source since there is no other water.“That’s even worse than 109,” John mused.

It was all about money. Lawyers, expert witnesses, prosecutors, and most *gendarmes* all made big money by convicting people, innocent or otherwise, and keeping prisoners in jail—always hoping for reprosecution shortly after parole in order to keep the money rolling in. Drug wholesalers and food or cleaning suppliers also made lots of money when the largest number of people possible were imprisoned for as long as possible. John and the *gendarmes* enjoyed a good relationship but he, too, still had to pay at times. Accordingly, Pamela sent him three packs of cigarettes in one *encomienda* sack, including one box of Pall Malls and another of Lucky Strike, in case Penailillo asked for them. They cost about one-half the prison price at supermarkets in Reñaca. Guillermo asked for one pack (he only smoked outside the cell), since he had no money to buy his own, and the other two John kept in his backpack in case the need for a payoff arose. John never smoked cigarettes in his life and had no intention of starting. But they served as money in prison.

Miami counseled John not to talk to just anyone about the contents of his books since doing so with the wrong people could have negative consequences. Not all would be happy with what John was exposing. Many people, *pacos* and *machucados* alike, made more money in prison than outside. John heeded the advice, but also noted that his intent was not to expose anyone. As a libertarian, John wanted a free market for all goods in prison, and he certainly had nothing against any *gendarme* other than Castro (nearly all of whom were John's fans). He was telling his real-life story, not hiding details, so that readers could understand what he went through, or what several eyewitnesses had told him. The story was so captivating that a Catholic University professor had just offered to finance the printing of all of John's latest books in Spanish—certainly very good and encouraging news to a man suffering unjustly like John. He felt like he had accomplished something important while imprisoned whereas most *reos* had nothing to add to their resumes but quasi-slave-labor cooking and cleaning activities. The first volume of this book was formatted and nearly translated, only awaiting the covers for English- and Spanish-language versions to come back. Once published, the knowledge about this hellhole would be in the hands of consumers. John also tried to maintain decent nutritional consumption, thanks to Pamela and Jana supplying him with good food through *encomienda*. He was enjoying Guillermo's meal preparation in the cell, and lent him his signed copy of *Los Chilenos En Su Tinto* (Those Colorful Chileans) by Hermógenes Pérez de Arce. So far the two men had a good relationship and John was able to glean new information and insights into prison life, along with *coa* dialect terminology.

With respect to the power structure among *machucados*, Guillermo helped John further refine the ranks in his own mind. An independent cell was run by a mean and often sadistic *choro*, some of whom even professed to be Evangelicals. This man, typically a “professional” robber, took whatever possessions he wanted from newcomers and had no problem putting a knife to the throat of anyone who opposed him. For instance, Guillermo lost his fingernail cutters that way and had his bedspread taken and cut into pieces for curtains. The *choro* usually verified the crime of newcomers, too, in order to root out rapists and child molesters disguising themselves as petty

thieves, etc. (He did so getting someone to access the record in the *gendarmes*' classification system.) Pedophiles, rapists, and womenbeaters were severely abused in the cell by the others. The *choro* also got to enslave others and ask them to massage his muscles or pick out blackheads, not to mention use tiny hand saws to cut up metal bed racks and make spears or other weapons—a process that could take weeks even with men working around the clock. In some cases homosexual favors would be required, although such things could end in retribution. One such perverted *choro* was left severely bleeding in a stairwell (where there are no cameras) after being cut and nearly beaten to death by his mutinous cellmates. Guillermo had to take sleeping pills, too, since the *choro* would not turn off his loud music until 6 a.m. or 7 a.m.

In more sophisticated hierarchies run by *vivos*, drug traffickers and moneyed thieves mainly, the *perros* were divided into two categories: (1) *perros bombas* who used physical violence to attack and injure or kill other *vivos*' *perros* or defend his own gang against the aggression of others, and (2) *perros cachorros* who were being trained to make and carry weapons, as well as to fight and injure or kill others. The latter category were made to fight in order to prove themselves and if they did not they would be beat by their own gang's *perros* in order to toughen them up. If one wanted to advance to a higher category, he had to fight and beat someone from that category, like a *perro bomba* attacking and triumphing over a *vivo*. Otherwise, no one fought outside of his category. There was no gain, for instance, for a *perro cachorro* to assault a *perkins* or *papi*. Attacking the latter, moreover, would usually result in severe reprisals since the elderly (over 55 generally) were respected so long as they minded their own business. A *perro* who beat up a *papi* could expect to be taught a lesson he would never forget.

Some of the more envious sycophants in 118 or 118A were anxious for Guillermo to take advantage of John, telling him to do so. But Guillermo quickly found out that there was little need to do so since John shared everything in the cell with him already, and he saw John sharing with others and helping them. Ismael said that such generosity qualified John as being a *perro chancho*, which was well looked upon. Such benevolence only made certain elements even more envious or resentful, like perhaps Anibal, Carlos, Raúl (the younger), and Oliver in particular, plus (possibly) Moroni. In fact, Oliver had planted seeds of dissent in Guillermo's mind, telling him to take advantage of John economically and to smoke in the cell. "I would hit him if he told me not to smoke in the cell," he said. Guillermo ignored his counsel. He knew he had a good thing going with John.

Castro came the next day and put Cristián Hernández Jara (27) in Rubén's cell, a relatively tall (1.8 meters), strong guy, newly arrived from what he said was a horrid and inhumane experience in quarantine *módulo* 108. He had no military background but got to 118 by someone with influence (an "uncle") putting in a good word for him. He was accused of sexual abuse two years ago by his ex-girlfriend who left him four years back, taking their two children. To hide this fact, and avoid being brutally treated by other inmates, he initially lied saying that he committed robbery with violence, a crime that he did not deny doing but rather justified it since the Coronavirus lockdown had destroyed his and others' jobs. John did not find out what he was actually being accused of until three months later.

The great majority of the rest of the *reos* had no problem with John and even liked him: Miami, Rubén, Ismael, Aarón, Sergio, Jorge, Daniel, Delfín, Ricardo, José, Alexis, Pato, Luchito, Marcelo, Pancho, Marcelo, Franco, and others. (Mauricio no longer liked him, but he liked the sycophants even less.) John had even made "friends" from other cellblocks, who greeted him

kindly. *Rufo* (from 105) stayed in touch, too, recently asking John to buy him a new television, even after weeks of non-attendance in the Historic Baptists Zoomcast.

John still had not determined if he was sent Guillermo as a cellmate as a form of reprisal from the envious sycophants, perhaps for instance for not cleaning off the table prior to teaching English, or for playfully tossing a taffy candy (as a joke) onto Ismael's shoulder (from the third floor) in the presence of the sycophants. Alternatively, Sergio could have brought him to John's cell in order to protect both men from being abused by 118's *machucados* or envious men. None of this was surprising since there was never a good day in terrestrial hell. Indeed, every day brought its own hassles and challenges. John had his Supreme Court date just three days away, although the resolution would not come out for twenty days afterward. Thus, he had no reasonable expectation leaving prison prior to 2021.

Guillermo was from Chile's upper classes (called ABC1, which is short for rich class A + upper class B + upper-middle class C1) by upbringing and likewise had trouble with the prison *coa* dialect. Of course, he had a much easier time with it than John did, who hardly bothered to try to learn it. But Guillermo passed along a glossary of ninety-seven mostly handwritten words that he had generated over his months imprisoned for John to place in this chapter:

Achaplinarse (*arrepentirse por miedo*, back out due to fear)

Achavarse (*reconocerse culpable*, assume one's own guilt)

Alimento (*comer/comida/recargar pila*, to eat/food/meal/charge)

Andar fome (*no contar o no tener*, do not tell or do not have)

Andar negro (*ser negativo contrario*, negative or backtalker)

Azúcar (*coca or cocaína*, cocaine)

Bala (*cigarrillo*, cigarette)

Barretín (*reglamento canero/carcelero*, prisoners' internal code)

Barro (*pasta base de cocaína*, crack cocaine)

Biombo (*cortina para tapar lecho*, curtain across one's bunk)

Bola (*boliviano*, Bolivian [often paid to bring water to the cell])

Botar grasa (*sacar jugo/aprovecharse*, milk him for all he's worth)

Brígida (*complicada or difícil*, hard or complex)

Brillo (*drogas/cocaína*, drugs/especially cocaine) **Cachorro** (*goma/menos capacitado de choro*, lamebrain follower)

Calcio (*leche* ["semen" in prison], milk)

Caleta (*lugar para esconder cosas*, hiding place) **Camaro** (*tienda para intimidad durante visitas*, makeshift tent used for sex during visitation)

Cana (*cárcel*, prison)

Canero (*repeat or long-term inmate*, jailbird or repeat offender)

Carreta (*rincón/lugar propio o de varias*, personal/group hangout)

Certero (*preciso or ubicado*, a sure bet or said with certainty)

Chupete (*cable del celular*, recharging cord)

Comer sushi (*caer or creer la mentira or agarrar papa*, fall for it)

Comida (*recargar teléfono*, charge cell phone battery) **Coraila** (*papa* ["penis" in prison], potato)

Correo de manilla (*entrega entre celdas*, cell-to-cell delivery)

Correo de ventana (*de ventana a otra*, pass window-to/window)

Cumpleaños (*golosinas*, junk food)

De la perra (*caída al suelo o despojo*, fell on floor/cannot touch it)

De menor (*de centro juvenil de detención*, from juvey hall) **De pana** (*cierto verdadero de corazón*, true or from the heart)

En chuca (*fondeado* or *escondido*, hidden)

Encarpa'o (*bajo la protección de alguien*, protected person)

Ensamblar (*acuchillar*, to knife or stab someone) **Escoba** (*igual a ti* [referring to something negative], same as you)

Estar en las ramas (*paveando*, doing something foolish/silly)

Falta (*delito entre choros*, some infraction between gang leaders)

Ficha (*de marca/bueno/original*, brand-name or quality good)

Fiscal (*un bien provisto por el Estado*, government provisions)

Galáctico (*lo mejor*, unbelievable or the best)

Hacer la cana (*ayudar desde la calle*, help to prisoners from without)

Hacer la mente (*influenciar/convencer a alguien*, convince)

Hacer la pierna (*ayudar en algo*, help out with some task) **Hacer la segunda** (*acompañar*, to accompany someone) **Ir a piso** (*doblegarse*, submit oneself to someone) **Ir por los palos** (*ser golpeado fuertemente*, take a severe beating)

Kisca (*cuchilla* or *cortapluma*, knife to cut or stab someone)

Lanza (*sable*, lance or spear)

Levantar bandera (*ultra choro ganador de todos*, badass fighter)

Levantar la mano (*asumir una culpa*, make oneself responsible)

Longi (*tonto* or *weon* or *leso*, big fool or idiot)

Maletaso (*dato de fuera perjudical*, outside call for one to be hit)

Manilla (*paquete encomienda*, bag of food/goods brought to you)

Masa (*pan*, bread)

Mata chancho (*medicamento o calmante fuerte*, painkiller) **Mente** (*chip*, cell phone SIM chip)

Meter la mano (*acuchillar* or *pegar/golpear*, stab or hit someone)

Morlaco (*plata* or *dinero*, money or bucks or cash) **No tener cana** (*estará muerto en cualquier módulo*, marked man)

Orillar (*no meterse* or *andar desapercibido*, uninvolved or stealth)

Orillar la cana (*cumplir condena sin involucrarse*, quietly serve out time)

Paco (*gendarme*, prison guard)

Patear el naranjo (*cuenterar*, tell tall tales)

Pegar en el cogote (*sapear*, nark/fink/rat out/report/spy) **Pelo de choclo** (*joven en cana/primerizo*, juvenile delinquent)

Pelotea'o (*ir de un lugar a otro*, sent from one place to another)

Perilla (*ventanilla* or *mitrillipare*, door bolt or peephole)

Perkins (*empleado de cosas menos digno*, maid/menial worker)

Perro (*cortejo del choro/vivo*, servant/employee of a choro/vivo)

Perro bomba (*peleador del choro/vivo*, hitman/thug of choro/vivo)

Pichula de hueso (*pedófilo violador/abusador*, child rapist/abuser)

Pikachú (*engrillados de pies y manos*, wrist/ankle chains put on)

Pila (*droga en pastilla/éxtasis*, illegal pills/Ecstasy) **Pileta** (*lavabos para ropa*, a big trough used

to wash clothes)

Piola (tranquilo y amable, easy-going and non-dictatorial, honest)

Poca luz (*bajo perfil*, keep a low profile so no one sees an action)

Pólvora (*detergente ropa*, laundry detergent)

Porte (*elementos usados para su trabajo*, tools used for your job)

Probar suerte (*intentar algo*, give it a shot)

Ranchero (*quien cocina/trae comida*, food preparers/deliverers)

Retova'o (*insolente choro*, insolent tough guy/robber) **Reventar** (*allanar*, toss or raid a cell or frisk a person) **Sacar la diligencia** (*un vivo envia a indagar*, vivo-ordered research)

Sacar el perro (*averiguar algo pa' perro*, perro-ordered verification)

Sarpa'o (*ser vivo* or *inteligente*, be the top dog or smart) **Sistema** (*teléfono celular*, cell phone)

Te están viendo amarillo (*cobardarse*, chicken out) **Tener baldosa** (*espacio/respeto en lugar*, respected somewhere)

Tirar huincha (*caminar en patio*, walk in the prison yard) **Topinar** (*hacer torpezas/estupideces*, to do idiotic/stupid things)

Toscano (*cigarrillo de restos de colillas*, cigarette made from butts)

Tumba (*trozo o presa de carne o pollo*, piece of meat or poultry)

Una fu (*pito*, joint or marijuana cigarette)

Ver tele (*ver mensajes en su celular*, look at your messages)

Vo'mismo (*tú tambien*, you too)

Voy ahí (*enganchar* or *estar dispuesto*, "I'm with you" or "I'll do it")

Machucados also reverse word syllables when they speak so that no one outside prison can understand them. For instance, *palito* (stick, broom handle) becomes *tolipa*, *cabezón* (big-headed or intelligent) becomes *zonbeca*. The verb form for "you (familiar) are," *tú eres*, is stated *tú soy*, confusing the first and second persons in the conjugation. It probably goes without saying that most *machucados* mumble, pronounce and enunciate poorly, have terrible diction, limited vocabulary (often being illiterate), employ slang and idioms, and speak so fast—akin to singing their sentences. The prison thus had its own atrocious dialect in addition to its own economy. The men with military backgrounds and more educated people like Guillermo tended to speak clearly, but John estimated that he understood about 80% of what the rest of the *machucados* said. It is bad enough being in terrestrial hell when one always understands what is being said, but it is worse being there and not always comprehending the conversation. John felt like a fish out of water in more ways than one. Once again he realized that he "was not in Kansas anymore."

Chapter IV On the Side of Their Oppressors There Is Power

It is said that the only certainties in life are death and taxes, but in Chilean prisons taxes are replaced with mutability, fear, harm, disappointment, and grief in the life of a *reo*. Thus, the *reo*'s existence is marked by uncertainty, sudden change, mental and physical degradation, unpleasant hassles, dissatisfaction, lack of proper food and medical care, and (in some cases) injury and death. December 10, 2020 was a good example of why John and others hated their terrestrial hell so much and longed to be free. Indeed, John had often thought that quick capital punishment would be preferable to being caged up in a Chilean prison. He recently told his friend Álvaro Vial as much, noting that each new day's grief would take a man quite by surprise. Prison life was good for dashing hopes and numbing the senses, even causing some like Ismael to fall into a lackadaisical fatalism.

John was half expecting that his Supreme Court hearing would be suspended but the news still hit him a bit hard, even after he found out that his defenders were responsible for the postponement. He wanted to leave prison and was tired of suffering unjustly. But his public defense team did not like at least one or two of the replacement judges (five in total) slated to hear the case and opted to postpone the hearing for a week (or two). For the time being, the projected new hearing date would be on the 17th. Part of the strategy at this level was to make sure that the mix of at least three regular justices and two other fill-in ones was optimal.

Apparently, lead lawyer Claudio Fierro knew the men who would be hearing the case and was not satisfied with what he saw. He and the defense team needed men who would hear them out, as well as comprehend the complexities of the case, and not simply rule with arbitrary bias like the lower court did. In Chile, there are not just nine justices who hear all cases (like in the United States) but rather many who specialize in criminal or civil cases. And John's legal team did not like what they faced. "I guess I should be happy that the team is putting so much thought into my case," mused John.

Hence, John was left to pray intensely for another week or two, while tolerating the grief of his isolated, lackluster, and disappointment-filled existence. Similarly, his wife was left to grind through yet another week or two alone (her friend Jana having returned to Osorno to be with her very sick and perhaps dying brother). Once again, John and Pamela both thanked God for the charity and help they received from others. Many (if not most) *machucados* had neither of those benefits. The only other good thing about the hearing delay was that the first volume of this book would be published soon and John hoped it would be a home run. He needed the book to produce a big impact, which was served by gaining a little more time for it to influence public opinion, including perhaps making a hit with some of the judges. John was still in the batter's box, but it turned out that his wait for the next pitch would once again be solitary for eighteen hours a day.

His new cellmate Guillermo had an even worse day. It was bad enough that the appeals court did not overturn his contempt of court conviction or put him into home arrest. Indeed, his present distress was a far worse problem. About an hour and a half after breakfast he walked back into the dining room and told John that a *paco* had come to transfer him back to *módulo* 111. John had taken off his glasses and laid his head over his hands, resting atop his book set on the table before him. He was frequently tired during the day, only sleeping four or five hours at night, at most six. Afternoon naps were commonplace for him but sometimes he would fall asleep reading

during *patio* time. Rubén said that *reos* were not allowed to sleep while out on the *patio*, although John never knew why, and he was thus always ready to be awakened and deal with any issues. Accordingly, he promptly looked up and listened attentively to Guillermo, then replying with disbelief, sadness, and some horror to his clearly disappointed cellmate and new friend, “You have not even been here a week. Why would they do that to you?”

Guillermo had little idea why, but speculated that the sadistic *paco* Cortés from 111 was behind it. Miami and Rubén surmised that Guillermo’s initial reassignment was made during one of Cortés’ days off and now that he was back his anger had boiled over—once he realized that a hapless and destitute *machucado* had escaped his clutches. Miami consoled Guillermo on account of the potential benefits that would accrue from the *escrito* he helped him write, wherein he formally asked to serve as a prison chef. Miami had turned that position down. But if the *consejo* would approve Guillermo when it met next week he would become a *mozo*. That fact would not only get him out of 111 for ten hours a day, he would also be able to petition the *pacos* to let him move back to 118 where most food *mozos* were housed.

Guillermo went back to the cell and gathered up his few belongings. Everyone was truly sad to see him go, and fearful for the ridicule and torture he would soon endure back in his cell run by the insolent *choro*. John, Miami, Rubén, Ismael, and a few others continued talking about the situation for some time after his departure. Guillermo was a merchant marine and, unlike armed forces personnel, had no legislated right to be in 118. There was little he could do. A few days prior, he had gone back to 111 to get some of his belongings and even then was ridiculed by Cortés for being the *perkins* of the *gringo*. Now things would only get worse. In fact, he sent John a text message saying just that: “*Hola amigo, aquí nuevamente a sufrir.*” (Hello, my friend, I am back here suffering.) He was already enduring grief in 111. John and everyone in 118 he talked to about it was sad. They all liked Guillermo. He did not deserve to be abused. As he parted, John slipped him 5,000 pesos, accompanied by good wishes, handshakes, and (for the first time John had seen in over a year) hugs from John, Miami, and Rubén. No one else had ever had such a sendoff; not Manuel, Mujica, Arturo, Karim, Alexis, or Raúl (the elder). Guillermo had simply hit it off with the men in 118 unlike so many other *reos*.

Natural phenomena also produced unwanted stress. Central Chile had been rocked by several strong earthquakes, near or above 6 on the Richter Scale, over the last few weeks. There is nothing quite like the feeling one has being locked in a bathroom/cage with no way out while the earth moves under his feet. Then prisoners knew that during and after a major earthquake, the last thing on the *pacos’* or just about anyone else’s mind would be the well-being of a few thousand *machucados*. Possible fires and earthquakes just added more fear and uncertainty to the prisoners’ reality. Moreover, as John wrote from his potential crypt, his unease intensified as he listened to the battle raging inside adjacent *módulo* 114 just after 5 p.m. with yelling, metal clashing, and guard dogs barking for twenty minutes. It arose again for ten minutes around 6:15 p.m. He could only imagine how many injuries there were, and maybe some slain. If the Supreme Court judges did not free him, he wanted to take advantage of the Strasbourg Convention treaty that would put him in jail in his Italian ancestral homeland. At least there he had some reasonable expectation of civilized treatment and less of the terrible reality that characterized Chilean prison life.

Castro was in charge of 118 the following day and was remarkably peaceful, with only one

minor interchange with the 118 *reos* while John and Ismael played chess. (Unsurprisingly, Castro showed little chess aptitude but he still liked to comment on the games being played.) Ismael had beaten John three days in a row, all but once because John was not paying enough attention and gave up his queen. Curiously, Rubén was beating Ismael most of the time recently but had also lost over forty straight to John. Yet Ismael managed to do what no one had ever done in over a year: beat John three times in a day (out of four). Only twice before had Rubén chalked up two wins in a day against John (normally John swept both men). And the glory was going to Ismael's head, who now had visions of grandeur and mentioned out on the *patio* that maybe he should be number one. "In your dreams," retorted John (1,306-107-22).

Castro had arrived forty-five minutes late (9:15 a.m.) to open the cell doors, possibly due to a meeting about upcoming visitation. Even though Santiago had been locked down again for Coronavirus concerns, Valparaíso and Viña del Mar were not quite as bad off. So the *gendarmes* approved one visitor coming one day per month starting next week. The arrangement was odd since the guards also stipulated that nothing could be brought into visitation or taken out, meaning John could not even bring his wife a heavy pile of books he had finished reading to take home. He could not even bring plastic chairs to sit on or lunch to eat. No one under age fourteen would be allowed. Small tables and chairs already in the visitation hall could be used but nothing more, except possibly an electric tea kettle and cups. All told, the new scheme was better than nothing, but was less than optimal. Oliver made some remark questioning what Castro said during the announcement and, in return, was scowled at during formation by Castro, who had little patience with general population *machucados*. Oliver was noticeably not too bright and had an overt *machucado* attitude that differed from the 118 regulars or the few men like Guillermo housed elsewhere.

Back in the cell, John only got a few things done before falling asleep. It was a wonder he could sleep at all with all the cell door banging going on in adjacent *módulos*. After his nap, he cut up a few apples that Miami had given him and doused them with the cheap vanilla yogurt that had arrived for breakfast. Earlier he had shared lunch with Rubén and Miami, using the last frozen meat and golden potatoes he had received from Pamela in the last *encomienda* sack. On the other side of the penitentiary, Guillermo reported that he was still suffering in 111, albeit with new cellmates (and without his former *choro*) not so harshly now. The *pacos* had come and "lightly" tossed the cell but he had seen worse treatment before and was expecting worse. He wrote that an anti-mutiny *paco* squad was on the way from Santiago, however, and they would be mean. So he had his own worries, not the least of which was food, the quality and quantity of which had dropped substantially since leaving 118. His cellmates chipped in 16,000 pesos apiece (which he did not have) to bring in a great, common *encomienda* stash on Mondays. On other days they washed *ranchos* and recooked it, like Miami and Rubén were still doing in 118. So his daily fare was not so dire, albeit hardly delicious like it was in 118. (Apparently, the *machucados* in 111 had neither a Pamela nor a Jana.)

Miami needed more detergent and Clorox to wash John's clothes, and John was able to reach Pamela just as she was leaving the supermarket so that she could bring some the next day via *encomienda*. Nevertheless, Miami did manage to get John's clothes washed and hung out, other than one of the thick sleeping socks that John had inadvertently left in his cell, and was able to deliver John's sheets and pillowcases at least. John tried to put on clean bedding at least bi-weekly, although he hated making his prison bed.

John had other problems with his book printing financing, which was no longer a sure thing. He was waiting for people to reply to his funding needs and also to find out the actual printing costs. Chile was allowing withdrawals from private social security accounts due to Coronavirus hardship and John was eyeing his account as a possible source of funds, too. Yet he tried to occupy his mind with productive things, trying to forget that he had now been in jail for thirteen months. Accordingly, he had had a good Zoomcast experience the night before teaching about English Baptist history in the Seventeenth Century, which always allowed him to end the day on a positive note—much like his occasional mini lectures to Miami on economics did during *patio* time.

But other aspects weighed on him, like the close yet undone indices for *Suffering Unjustly*, and the financing for *Llevando la Cruz*, as well as undone covers for both books. His wife's unresolved health issues (not to mention his own) and his pickup truck's mechanical problems added to his helpless discontent. As usual, no jail day was a good day, even when a *reo* got a few crumbs or scraps thrown his way. Just then John recalled that most *machucados*, and even Ismael, Aaron, Miami, and Rubén, had grown accustomed to laying cheese and lunchmeat slices directly on the table before them when they had no plate. That was after the stack of those foods was handed out slice-by-slice with someone's raw, grimy fingers. John figured the added bacteria pickup must really serve to toughen up the *reo*'s digestive tract. He himself now regularly ate breakfast food touched by others, which he had not done since early childhood. The men just got used to such miserable, unsanitary, and deplorable behavior. The beat went on.

The next day Bustos was in charge of 118 and with him came a *gendarme* circular that clarified the upcoming visitation. Not surprisingly, Castro had been confused on a few things. 118's visitation would occur on Christmas Day (rather than the next week) from 10 a.m. until noon and packaged store-bought foods and clothes could be brought in. Plus, it was likely that John could send books out with his wife. However, there would be no kissing or sharing a meal together since that would require removing anti-Coronavirus masks. Hugging might be allowed but even that was unclear due to the 1.5-meter distancing required. Only one visitor over age fourteen would be allowed in. The memorandum also said that *camaros* would be prohibited, which were makeshift bed-clothes tents or otherwise "private" areas set up in the visiting hall, wherein a man could have sex with his visitor. Few from 118 were going to have a visitor since it would affect Christmas morning activities with family and because the event would be such a cold reception after nearly nine months without seeing a loved one. Accordingly, Miami and Rubén probably would not have a visitor. Ismael could not have one since his family was in locked-down Santiago and thus would not be able to make it over. Ricardo and Cristián said they would not bother anyone to come and visit that day and Mauricio's mother was too old to come (he was concerned that she would be infected with Covid-19). John, however, could manage one since Pamela had no little children or others to deal with. Aníbal, Helmut, Pato, Francisco, and Franco, were the only others that might have a visitor; Carlos, Sergio, Aaron, Raúl (the younger), Delfín—who was questionably sentenced to sexually abusing a teenage girl repetitively when she would sit on his lap bare-bottomed (when he was 78)—and some others never did. (The *mozos* would probably have another visitation day set aside for themselves.) So long as a local bus or Uber was running, Pamela might as well try to make it over to see John (by legislation, no non-essential businesses are allowed to operate in Chile on Christmas Day). The two planned to break the anti-hugging and kissing rule at the end of visitation time anyway, even if it meant being punished by placing restrictions on future visits. They had not seen each other in nearly nine

months.

The couple had had some pleasant, long phone calls recently, which included in part reviewing the characters and stories in *Bearing the Cross*, and the grim future of Chile, which seemed to be exploding with crime—especially in the Ninth Región (around Temuco). Many people on the Right considered John’s dissuasive shots in Reñaca in November 2019 as being the first four of a coming civil war. John just figured he had defended himself against hooligans. The two also discussed more mundane matters, like why the *encomienda paco* refused to let in BBQ sauce and Caesar salad dressing a few hours earlier. The guard (who did not know her) did relax some other rules, however, once Pamela told him that the goods were for the famous, well-liked *gringo*. Curiously, there were few people in line to drop off *encomienda* sacks. Too, John tried to convince Pamela that he needed a paring knife to cut meat and peel fruit in his cell. She could be obstinate at times when she did not want to do something. She was thinking at first he could continue to make do with his butter knife, or tear his food with his teeth like an animal would. But she later succumbed to reason and said she would try to see if Panchito could smuggle one in, along with some cash, a frying pan (the *machucados* had stolen John’s), and some hefty garden trash bags in case he had to move again. They also had a small argument about why it was better to buy slightly-more-expensive sliced cheese packages in order to avoid spoilage of a larger package being left open in the cell for several days. Even more than John, albeit less than Sinatra, Pamela liked doing things *her way*. But she could be persuaded otherwise.

Out on the *patio*, things were fairly normal with the same cast of characters playing chess and reading, although John did have an extended opportunity to teach Miami more about free market economics. John also pointed out the sorrow that comes from gleaning such anti-statism knowledge (reading Ecclesiastes 1:18). Miami had all but rejected democracy after finishing Benegas and Krause’s *En Defensa de los Más Necesitados* and now favored instead authoritarian rule or perhaps (at John’s suggestion) political anarchy. Moreover, together they looked up some key Bible passages that John shared, showing the satanic nature of the state: Luke 4:5-6, Psalms 2:2 and 94:20, Revelation 2:10 and 19:19 for starters, all of which nicely supported a public policy that minimized the role of government in people’s lives. Rubén caught some of the conversation, and Ismael did somewhat less, while Aaron was inside making a varnished wood plaque with a Psalm written on it (using fancy calligraphy).

News from others also came in. Miami saw Karim in the adjacent holding cell waiting for a videoconference court appearance. Karim seemed to be handling being locked up in *módulo 107* for twenty-three hours a day so long as he had his cell phone to keep himself occupied. Furthermore, Guillermo wrote John that he was trying to find more interesting stories for him to write about in his book. He needed a little money, too, in order to buy food and was asking for help. Time passed quickly with all the details rolling in during the day. Back in his cell, John continued to work on his books—a seemingly endless task that would be so easy to finish if he were outside. But he was not. Yet he realized that his productivity while in captivity was probably amazing, relatively speaking. He was no John Bunyan (who wrote *The Pilgrim’s Progress* from a seventeenth-century English jail cell), but he did more studying and writing than anyone else he knew or had heard about. Hence, he was content to be busy, eating his pizza and salad all alone, while still trying to be sociable (via social media) and talking a bit to his son David about whether to continue with his nice girlfriend Jordan.

Penailillo was in charge of 118 the next day. Pamela had sent John a pack of Lucky Strike cigarettes by *encomienda* but the guard never asked for any. Thus, John kept his powder dry for another day. It was a fairly normal Sunday, with reading, language study, chess, and chat. John had been gaining weight (Miami noticed it, too) and so handed out more of his food than usual, making people happy. He also sang Psalm 100 alone (in Spanish) and read Numbers 15 (in Spanish). That afternoon he read Numbers 16, 17, and 18, and participated in the Historic Baptists Zoomcast (about the life of Elijah) once back in his cell.

The only thing eventful during the day was the visit of the new officer in charge of the prisoners, *Comandante Molinet*, who came to 118 with a pair of other officers and a few regular *gendarmes* in his entourage. He clarified that no one under age eighteen or over sixty-five could visit, that only *one* visitor was allowed per *reos*, that the *gendarmes* would arrange the tables and chairs just purchased so that 1.5 meters of separation would be achieved, that the visitor could bring absolutely nothing in but his clothes and identification card, that masks would have to be worn, and that no kissing or hugging would be allowed. Violation of the rules would result in suspension of visitation privileges for eight months. Furthermore, 118's visitation day would be on the 25th of each month from here on out.

While the rules sounded Draconian, Molinet pointed out that they were just following the health ministry's requirements. "It's not my fault," he said. Yet, in reality, the *gendarme* observers would probably (intentionally) look away or turn their backs momentarily, at which time there could be some physical contact with wives or girlfriends. Remember that the *reos'* female companions had not been seen in nearly nine months. Just how would the men know when they could kiss and hug? He said, "Use some intelligence." He also added that although these rules were onerous and a bummer, at least having visitation is a step in the right direction, the terms might improve over time, and possible cellblock mutinies would perhaps be avoided. He took questions and most often replied that there would be no exceptions to the rules made for special cases, including people coming from long distances.

John told Molinet that he was a reader and politely expressed his desire to give his wife some of his books to take out. Similarly, Francisco (Pancho) said that he wanted to return a large stock of plasticware to his mother. Molinet said he would think about what to do about such matters, especially because accumulated books were a "fire hazard," but that initially his rule would be that no such things could be taken to the visitors. Instead, an *escrito* should be submitted that would allow passage of such items during *encomienda* delivery day, which would continue as usual on Saturday mornings for 118. John was less than satisfied with the visitation scheme but later told Pamela that it was worth going through the motions just to get a good story for this second volume of *Bearing the Cross*. They laughed as they imagined the rather cruel joke of a visit it would be as they sat apart, smiled, and waved, with little difference between visitation in person and a phone call. Yet, what else should one expect in terrestrial hell than unfulfilled expectations?

Cisternas was back in charge of 118 the next day — the day when the plasticware did not dry as fast due to the eclipse (which all the *reos* saw with an eye shield) and, for similar reason, the gnats lived longer to annoy anyone, like John, sitting out in the sun for thirty to forty minutes. Guillermo's money had arrived from John's friend in the United States, but Pamela was unable to take it to the prison window and would thus not be able to do so until the 21st. That was bad

news for Guillermo who was only “surviving,” as he put it. So he was trying to arrange with Pamela directly a way for her to do an electronic transfer to someone in 111 that could get the cash to him sooner.

John ’s friendly courier Panchito, Marcelo’s stepfather, was far more efficient than any *paco* and he did not charge for his services. (He was unwilling to work for unknown *reos* like Guillermo, however.) He was near retirement, almost certainly coming before this volume would be published, and thus could be mentioned freely without much concern. He did nothing wrong or immoral by bringing goods to prisoners; he just skirted standard *gendarme* procedures in order to do a good deed for someone he believed had gotten a raw deal. Even more ironically, Mauricio had once told John that Panchito was an atheist who had Marxist leanings politically. Although he was not a libertarian Baptist like John, he was still willing to help him. Good people like Panchito are important to mention to outsiders because they are godsends to any *reo* fortunate enough to have them, and no *reo* ever wants to put them at risk.

Pamela had delivered several items John needed to him the day before. He would then bring to John’s cell the next day while he was on break. As it turned out, Panchito had had a bad day at work prior to meeting John and slipping things through his door portal or under the door. A *machucado* with cancer died in his presence. It is hard to imagine many things worse than dying in prison without loved ones, especially when one is so sick. Chilean prisons are in nearly every way inhumane, and the legislative and judicial powers that compel terminally ill people to stay in prison manifest the calloused hearts and cruel nature of some. The prisoner could not breathe and just expired despite Panchito’s efforts to save him. At any rate, he faithfully fulfilled his promise. He got John’s vitamin C, vitamin D3, and magnesium from Pamela (along with a copy of Doctor Luís’ prescription sent electronically from Santiago), plus a small frying pan (*paila*), a half dozen eggs, a couple of sharp table or kitchen knives, a roll of 100 yard waste bags, plus 70,000 pesos in cash, and smuggled them in to John. In over thirteen months in prison, John had seen many frying pans and none of them still had all the non-stick teflon intact; it had been scraped off over the years of use. While none of this “booty” was anything special to people outside prison, it was of great benefit to any *reo*. Indeed, talk about stirring up envy! John was going to have to hide these items carefully, and let few people know that he had them. Yet he was pleased-as-punch to have acquired them.

Nevertheless, not everything was going John ’s way. He had left-knee pain—a knee which had endured two surgeries in 1991 and 2012—perhaps due to seasonal swelling. Moreover, he still had spots and floating things “swimming” before his eyes, plus muscle pain in his back and chronic joint pain in his left shoulder. In spite of it all, his work on his books continued at night. He slept poorly in general due to the discomfort from the narrow, hard bed and ice-cold walls, but rarely complained about them since there was little that he or anyone else could do about it or the ailments that prison life caused him.

The next day a young *gendarme* was in charge of 118 and no one knew his name, not even the sycophants. He was absent part of the day and was not very friendly, not even responding with the slightest kind word to John’s *buenos días*. John started feeling a bit under the weather, however, even losing a chess game to Ismael while not feeling well. After he went back in his cell, he checked his blood pressure (which was low the day before): 124/74 after walking half a mile. He hoped the cold sweat on his brow meant that nothing more serious than light-

headedness had taken hold of him. He probably just needed more sleep than the five hours he averaged. It might have been water related, too. The kiosk had not had bottled drinks for two days. It was a good thing that Pamela had gotten him two 3-liter bottles of Canada Dry Ginger Ale Light. He did not look forward to the prospect of boiling the prison's rat-contaminated well water to drink. But he only had enough liquid to last twentyfour hours.

On December 15th, a new *reo*, Juan (38), showed up. He was temporarily in Valparaíso to deal with some legal matter but was usually interned at the tiny Los Andes prison, an hour due north of Santiago, where he had served twentyseven months of a five-year and one-day sentence for the equivalent crime of second-degree murder (or maybe manslaughter). He killed a man pursuing and persecuting him by shooting him three times. The prosecutor was asking for fifteen years but legitimate self-defense was shown by Juan's attorney, allowing his sentence to be reduced by two-thirds. On the one hand, John had shot four bullets at the ground, with one man's leg being hit by a ricochet, and he was initially sentenced to eleven years. On the other hand, Juan actually killed someone but got less than half of the jail time. Both verdicts were rendered by trial courts in the same region. Such was arbitrary Chilean justice!

Juan could play chess a little, but both John and Rubén beat him several times during his first day on the *patio*. Juan knew all about John, whom he said was "famous" in Los Andes and everywhere else in Chile. He obviously liked John and what he did to defend himself, perhaps considering him to be a fellow traveler of sorts. He queried John about his profession outside of prison and then again regarding his book he was reading, *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, an academic work that questions many postulates of radical ecology, but he had a hard time grasping the concepts. It was just too much for the self-described professional bad-guy to grasp. John was glad that talkative Juan had hit it off with Moroni the night before and thus requested to be his cellmate in 118A, since John's cell might have otherwise possibly been his short-term destination. Guillermo was a far more suitable companion and was still trying to get back to 118. Always hoping for the best, even though it was a silly thing to do in terrestrial hell, John settled in for a nice nap, wishing for something more to drink and hoping that chef Guillermo would return to do the cooking and cleaning.

Chapter V If You Take It Patiently

“ You need to boil it for at least five minutes,” counseled Miami.“The prison well water is contaminated by rats,” added Rubén. John was not looking forward to what was now on the horizon, ever since Sergio came back from his kiosk run—for the third straight day—without water. There was no flavored water, juice, or soda pop either. Likewise, no one in 118 had any to sell. It was a precarious situation. Carlos gave John a package of Sprim-brand citrus powder—after hanging a blanket over John’s window so that no *paco* could see him using his cellphone at night. John gave him a tip of 2,000 pesos then reluctantly boiled water in his electric tea kettle—for the first time destined to be drunk rather than to be used for bathing. Even though the bad-camping-trip science was on his side, he was still displeased with the prospect of having to partake of the purified infectious prison water.“What more should I expect from the River Styx,” he mused.“This is no country club,” went through his mind as an unusual amount of door banging in 114 and 115 continued throughout the afternoon. At least he had slept through the minor earthquake jolts that were felt over the past few mornings: a 4.3 Richter Scale event at 4:58 a.m. preceded by a 3.8 one at 3:50 a.m. on December 16th; a 4.1 one that hit at 4:59 a.m. on December 15th; a 4.5 one that hit at 4:15 a.m. on December 12th. These tremors were no big deal by Chilean standards. But Miami, Pamela, and some others still noticed them. Castro’s presence in charge of 118 that day reminded John that he faced far greater threats than earthquakes.

The curtain covering John ’s cell window had to be installed urgently, as *Cabo Riquelme* and his colleague had apparently seen John using his cell phone while opening the downstairs door to 118A (across the *patio*) the night before. It was remarkable that through such a dirty or stained plexiglass window, and with the internal cell lights turned on, they could see John’s cellphone’s glow from two floors down across the *patio*. Thankfully, Riquelme was one of John’s many fans among the *gendarmes* and acted quite jovially about the incident,“Hey, *gringo*, stop using that cellphone” he yelled (laughing), with John making some curt wisecracks through his window in reply. Then the two guards came up to John’s cell door and remarked about what happened at first seriously (in a joking way) and then later laughing with John about the day’s events where political prisoner John had again been on the television newscasts. Nevertheless, John thought it best to avoid anyone detecting his cell phone use who happened to be down on the *patio* area. The next guards might not be nice.

John was part of the top story on several news channels once again, this time related to newly proposed legislation introduced by eight senators from the hard and center left (including one Christian Democrat). This legislation would provide amnesty to all yet-to-be prosecuted criminals who took part in destroying much of Chile’s infrastructure, and hurting police officers and others, in late 2019 and much of 2020. However, pardons would also be extended to people like John who had been preliminarily convicted of crimes related to these protests. John discussed the matter with his lawyer Guillermo, Miami, Rubén, Ismael, Delfín, and the aforementioned two prison guards. It seemed too good to be true that he could be set free on account of such legislation, and center-left President Piñera was against signing the bill should it ever reach his desk.

John figured that he and the jailed police officers were being used as a sweetener so that just enough senators and representatives from the Right would join with the Left and override

Piñera's promised veto (two-thirds of each chamber required). But John's legal consultant David Zúñiga Vera thought that the proposed legislation would never be approved. Nevertheless, John, Miami, and others optimistically held out some hope that at least during the Supreme Court arguments, which serendipitously could be heard the next morning, this new bill could be brought up in John's favor. Some of the sitting judges had been confirmed rather recently by the Senate, including those sponsoring the bill. Nevertheless, lawyer Guillermo said John's hearing would most likely be reprogrammed again for the following week.

Meanwhile, over in 111, *reo* Guillermo reported that he was undergoing his normal routine in that hellish environment. At least the 40,000 pesos sent by John's friend had arrived in his account to help ease his burden. A few *machucados* over there had fought and been sent to 112 as punishment. Such happenings were par for the course. He also heard that, over in 104, anti-mutiny *gendarmes* were raiding cells and making their inhabitants miserable. "Maybe they deserved it," thought John. All he could think about is that he did not deserve what he was being put through, even if 118 was better than 111 or 104. Whether through the Supreme Court or the leftist legislation, he wanted out.

The next day, Castro was back in charge and the day started with a twist. John's cell door was opened half way and Castro peered in and said, "Come on. I need you and some other guys to help carry some chairs." John set his open Bible on his bunk, left his *quesadillas* cooking in his little oven, and followed after the scrawny man. The others called to do slave labor were Ismael, Cristián, and Raúl (the younger). It is not clear why they were picked but Castro must have had a burr under his saddle to have selected those four over so many others. The job was simple: walk outside, then over to the administration building, up the stairs, then across the way into the normal visitation hall used by 118's *reos*. There were about ten tables set up inside, with two 1960s public school chairs at each one, and the men had to carry fourteen of these small metal chairs (with wooden seats and backs) to the *patio* for the *reos* convicted while underage, located next to psychiatric *módulo* 117. The *módulo* was located just down under and behind 118, and the men had to rush so the youngsters could have their visitation at 10 a.m. Some chairs were broken while others did not stack well. John carried four, awkwardly, and the others three or four each. The round trip was no more than 400 meters, but days like this reminded John that he was no different than a slave in the eyes of Castro.

Roll call had yet to be done and Castro was in a hurry to get back after the chairs were delivered. He was bothered that evangelical *gendarme* Mario Salas was talking to John (in English) about the highly noticeable blotches on his face that his dermatologist had produced upon identifying large areas of skin discoloration or possibly cancer. So he called John to come, who bolted after the scrawny man, then went straightaway to his cell to get his plastic armchair, backpack, and *quesadillas*—what he normally carried down every day. While he was on the last flight of stairs coming back down, Castro started yelling up the staircase for stragglers to get in line. John was the last one to make it to formation, which was very rare for him. He called off "once" (eleven) as the last man in the lineup.

By the way, only once before had John called off his lineup number in English for fun. But he had refrained from doing so since then because it made ignorant *machucados* like Aníbal even more resentful, as they mistakenly thought John was showing off and letting others know that he thought himself superior to them. Alternatively, if he spoke in Spanish it gave the resentful ones

an opportunity to mock and make fun of his accent, even if he was quite fluent. Ismael never mocked John's English. He was rather fascinated by it: "Were you just speaking to that *gendarme* in English? Is he fluent?" John acknowledged that they were speaking in English and that Salas had spent some time New York. His English was marginally fluent, citing as evidence for that verdict that Salas did not know that the word in English for *sanar* is to heal.

A few hours later, John was eating lunch in the dining room when Castro barged in and asked him, Cristián, and Ismael to haul the chairs back from *módulo* 116. John did not understand the command right away. The other two did and had left already. Once the order was clarified, John put his lunch away and headed down to the foyer where he left the chairs earlier. All four were still there, evidently unused. After responding to the *gendarme* in charge who had queried what he was doing, he took three of them and headed up the concrete ramp, meeting Castro and the other two *reos* as he turned right alongside the modular storage unit set on small stilts in the parking area. Castro told him to go wait up top and he obeyed. Raúl (the younger) was apparently exempt from duty this time, so Ismael and Cristián, young and strong, would have to get the rest of the chairs themselves. Along the way, John exchanged silent facial greetings with Mauricio, who was cruising the walkway below the infirmary about fifteen paces off John's route, and John finally stood waiting by the locked visitation hall door. John was recalling the fact that Mauricio was denied parole recently, as all child molesters were being held back—after the scandalous murder of a girl in nearby Villa Alemana executed by a paroled rapist—when Ismael and Cristián appeared lugging five chairs apiece. Moreover, John was not just a little delighted to see Castro carrying the one chair he had left. The chairs were left outside and Castro sent the three *reos* back to 118. A while later Castro returned with Ismael and Cristián to put the chairs inside, while John read a book and played chess.

Unfortunately, Sergio had taken kiosk orders while John was away and thus John missed the opportunity to buy some much-needed fluids. However, sympathetic Sergio took John to the lunchroom filing cabinet (next to where he had been teaching Necúlman English) and found it was full of excess food items from breakfasts past. There was no doubt that a business opportunity existed for the *pacos* and their sycophants. "Here, these sixteen little Colun orange and pineapple kid's juice boxes should tide you over in the meantime," he said. John picked up eight crummy Colun vanilla yoghurts, too, which would go along nicely with the orange and apple recently acquired from Miami. And without a doubt these Colun food products were far better than the nasty Colun cream cheese (wrapped sausage style) that was rendered to *reos* at breakfast, along with even nastier PF *paté* (Spam-like meat spread) similarly packaged. At any rate, the bill came to 5,000 pesos. Not caring about who profited illicitly, John was relieved! The gulps of flavored ratwater had gone down hard at lunchtime and now he was looking forward to drinking the juice. Nothing and no one in prison surprised John any longer. For him, any non-aggressive means to satisfy needs was just fine.

The latest additions to 118 were showing their true colors. Juan, a relatively tall, lanky subject with a small, pultruding pot belly, seemed more like a con-man who was intrigued with poker and gambling. Miami explained to him how *Punta y Cana* was played and the board they had for that purpose in 118's erstwhile casino. To Ismael's chagrin once he found out, Juan had astutely asked John for a 1,000-peso loan earlier, when no one else was in the dining room. John gave it to Juan and said not to bother making repayment promises he had no intention of keeping. Juan probably just wanted to see how many bills John had in his wallet so he could get more later on.

John had just received some cash from his courier Panchito and, adding to what he had already, now had 117,000 pesos on hand—which is a lot for prison. So John would have to be extra careful around that murderer for as long as he remained in 118A. Juan's tenure was uncertain, however, ranging from a few more days to a couple of months. But John would need to keep both eyes wide open around him, especially knowing that Moroni was his cellmate and might be a bad influence on him.

Cristián was another story. He had a physical education degree and notably built up chest and arms, but his pot belly had emerged after a terrible knee injury and surgery a few years earlier that prevented him from playing sports. He had a real knack for drawing, however, and had a successful tattoo business. His wife was a nominal Evangelical and he, too, had interest in the faith, talking to John about his willingness to get right after getting out of jail, marrying his girlfriend, who worked as a clerk in the courthouse. Because of his decision to get involved with what he said was an unstable woman who would later falsely accuse him, he had missed the recent birth of his son. Now he was practical, feigning being contrite and penitent in hope of getting a reduced sentence of under five years and sent to home arrest, where he could continue drawing and doing tattoos. His arms were covered with them! Over the coming months, his business would expand substantially. Akin to Delfín, Marcelo, Miami, Ismael, and perhaps Ricardo, Helmut, and Mauricio, he struck John as being different than other *machucados* like Juan, Oliver, Moroni, José, Franco, Aníbal, and others—not in that he was innocent but that he did not share the innate criminality of the typical prisoner. He was just a guy who was itching to do something stupid and did so. Rather than having envious resentment like the *machucados*, he admired John's culture, reading, book writing, knowledge, evangelicalism, and chess playing, and had the genuineness to tell him so. He spent most of his time drawing and lifting weights with Ismael. John wished him well and hoped to see him change his life. He also suggested that he draw each *reo* in 118 and collect a commission. His work was quite good.

Besides Castro and the rat-water falling into his tender stomach, the only other things bothering John were the fact that Ismael beat him in chess again (even though he lost the rematch) and that statistician Lombørg had made an stupid comment near the end (page 306) of his generally good book, *The Skeptical Environmentalist*. “[I]t would be well worth society reducing CO₂ emissions until the cost of cutting back an extra ton of carbon is equal to the advantage...” The rhetoric sounds so elegant on the surface but defies a basic economic principle: societies do not have preferences or choose; only individuals do. He had fallen for the same claptrap dished out by socialists and leftists that suggests that some publicly spirited bureaucrats and politicians will be able to know what nearly everyone wants with respect to the environment and restricting carbon emissions, while at the same time having the will to implement the precise public policy to facilitate the goal without being influenced by lobbies or special interest groups. Even if the book was eighteen years old, his ignorance annoyed John. A good academic from Western Europe should know better, especially after having done such a spectacular job in the preceding chapters on population, water and other natural resources, pollution, energy, accidents, and cancer risk. “Oh well,” thought John, “I have far more pressing matters to deal with in ‘paradise,’ like pushing the water and used toilet paper out of the *patio* bathroom-shower complex, making sure I do not get robbed, and avoiding being hassled by Castro or the sycophants.” Furthermore, John's Supreme Court hearing was postponed yet another week, now rescheduled for Christmas Eve. He need do nothing to prepare for it other than be patient, pray, and promote the first volume of this book *Bearing the Cross* and the Spanish version *Llevando la Cruz*.

Cisternas was back in charge of 118 the following day and some big changes were brewing—largely stemming from the fact that Cristián was well-connected, having a relative (“uncle”) in the upper ranks of the *gendarmes* who was looking out for him. Why else would he be in 118? He was not a rapist like Alexis (now in 107) in constant danger of violence from other *reos*, a *mozo ranchero* given the privilege of being in 118, a high-profile foreigner at risk, or a former military man or police officer. The fact that he was in 118 meant he had someone pulling strings for him. He had gotten along very well with everyone, especially Ismael. Both were young and liked bodybuilding, and neither were particularly interested in drugs or partying—although both had used drugs in the past. Nevertheless, some things were a little different between them. For instance, when Ismael dropped a potato chip on the dining room floor, John observed, he would pick it up, blow on it, and pop it into his mouth. Cristián did not seem to be the kind to do that, at first, although he would show his true colors later on. Both were likewise friendly with John, with the difference being that the former incessantly called out “Doctor J. M. Cobin” whenever he came into the dining room or saw John out on the *patio*, while the latter always politely (and not excessively) referred to him as “Mister.” (John could never understand why Chilean *reos* were so fascinated with saying his name. Miami and Aaron often said it, too.) Yet the two men got on well, so much so that Miami commented to John, “Some of Cristián’s friends are pulling strings for him; they want to get him in his own cell with Ismael, and that requires moving either you or Rubén out.”

John had just sat down again after having stepped over to Ismael and Cristián’s table, in order to give them one of the two sandwiches (to split between them) that he had made the night before. Suddenly, Sergio opened the building door and called out John’s name. (Anyone hearing his name called got a little anxious.) Upon entering the interior of the building, Sergio told John, “The *cabo* wants to speak to you.” Cisternas was leaning on the ramp railing outside, near the parking area where the *gendarme* paddy wagons came to load *reos* going to some courthouse. “I need to make a cell change *gringo*; you need to move in with *guatón* Rubén upstairs in cell 20. I cannot leave anyone alone in a cell.” John was surprised, although he shouldn’t have been since there are never any real guarantees given in terrestrial hell; uncertainty is part of the torture. John had a good relationship with this *paco*, and tried to think quick-on-his-feet, then replying without the corresponding subtlety required by Chilean cultural norms: “Shoot, I just spent a few hundred thousand pesos fixing up my cell and it would be a shame to lose it all. Why couldn’t Rubén move in with me? Look, I’m willing to pay to stay put just like *suboficial mayor* González used to offer us *reos*.” Young Cisternas replied that there was nothing that he could do. “My hands are tied and I am not going to jeopardize my career by taking payments. I think cell 20 is better than yours; it has a ceramic tile floor and other amenities. Either way, you must move to cell 20 or Rubén has to move into cell 12 with you.” John gently retorted that the *suboficial mayor* never took payment directly but only indirectly through the *mozo*, and that he thought his cell was nearly as nice as Rubén’s, which featured a wet wall due to roof seepage, even though it did provide the best internet connection in the building. All this rhetoric was to no avail. “Sounds like there is nothing to be done. I will go talk to Rubén and let you know what we decide.”

Rubén, who was presently living with Cristián in cell 20, was not pleased by what heard and went to talk with Cisternas. After considerable time discussing the matter, he emerged victorious and sat on the *patio* playing chess with Oliver (using the plastic set). John came near and asked what happened. Rubén replied, “We will both be left in our cells alone; I reasoned with Cisternas

that if those two guys wanted to live together then they should be inconvenienced rather than us. Cristián Is moving in with Ismael and Ricardo even as we speak. The three youngsters will be happy as clams together.” John was amazed at Rubén’s clout. Yet lowly, chess-inept Oliver beat him, shockingly, three out of four games that day, hurting Rubén’s pride and later generating taunts from Ismael. John even joined in by crowning Oliver, “Number Two.” Rubén shouted out that Ismael had helped Oliver and that he was giving his opponent a gift since he was due to be paroled that night and thus no longer be confined in 118A or playing chess with us.

Back in the dining room, reading next to his wooden chess set, John assumed all was well until Sergio came in. He explained that Rubén had *not* resolved anything and that John still had to move out so that a cell could be freed up for the two bodybuilders. He added that John needed to stop chattering nonsensically with the *paco* about how much he had invested in fixing up his cell or by directly offering a bribe to the *paco*.

Of course the *paco* wanted money! John had paid him before indirectly, too, giving Carlos 30,000 pesos to buy a single pack of “cigarettes” and thus permit him to move back into his previous cell where he had lived with Manuel. John also recalled his friend Cisternas asking him for a slice of pizza, and his attempt to negotiate a better position by offering to teach him English. “I want to get you into the best position possible,” said Sergio, “where you make just one payment and not a biweekly fee of 15,000 pesos like Raúl (the elder) paid *mozo* Aníbal who in turn paid *suboficial mayor* González earlier this year. John knew Cisternas was willing to take something but had not handled the situation well. He recalled the biblical maxim, “money answers everything” (Ecclesiastes 10:19) that was observed every day in prison. He realized that should have gone straight to Sergio instead—the sycophant most sympathetic with John. He also came to grips with the fact that he was not good at negotiating while being shaken down by a *paco*. “I am a Libertarian, Sergio, and I do not mind paying for services, even if others consider them to be repugnant or immoral. Is 30,000 or 50,000 pesos sufficient?” He replied that 50,000 pesos (USD 63) would do the trick. “When can you have the cash?” John replied, “Right now.” Sergio then went off to make the arrangement. He returned shortly thereafter with the approval, and John handed over the cash. Sergio quickly zipped it inside his chest pocket. Nothing more was said about John changing cells. “Rubén Is going to continue to believe that this was his doing,” John noted. “Let him keep thinking that,” said Sergio, “but do not tell anyone about this brokered deal.” John agreed. Sergio was always careful to conduct such business in private where no one else was involved.

Sergio added that it was likely that Guillermo would return to 118 from 111 on the weekend or next week and head straight to John’s cell. “I tried to set you up with someone *piola* (easygoing) like him. Do you want to live with a drug smoking/snorting *ranchero* instead?” said Sergio. John replied that he did not but that Marcelo and Alexis (the Evangelical he first met in 109) wanted to move in. Sergio said he was only nominally Evangelical and in practice he (like all other *rancheros*) resolved personal issues with a knife—just like other *machucados*. At lunchtime, Ismael came in and John asked him why he wanted to live with Cristián and why he helped Cristián get into his and Ricardo’s cell. He replied, “I don’t want to live with Cristián or with three guys in our small cell, but I did it to be a Good Samaritan and keep you and Rubén happy.” With so much conjecture and contradictory evidence John did not know what to believe. But at least he was safe and sound again.

Chapter VI Wherever He Turns, He Prospers

It turned out that the *gendarme* meeting the day before had nothing to do with visitation but rather about the personnel shortage and worries about a mutiny or uprising. “Fourteen of the two hundred fifty or so and get *pacos* were on leave or sick,” Rubén recounted as he and Miami shared their usual Friday lunch together with John. Pamela made enough food to go around, Rubén cooked it in a teflon-relieved frying pan on a *micrón*, adding butter, spices, and chunks of turkey (somehow acquired from the officer’s buffet), and all three pitched in to wash the dishes afterwards. Only John and Rubén brought down their plastic plates. For some reason Miami always left his upstairs and ate off the lid of the plastic container that had been used to keep the meal in the freezer since Saturday. During lunchtime conversation, Rubén patted himself on the back for averting the cell change as the three lamented that there was always someone or something coming along to disrupt the otherwise peaceful yet precarious equilibrium in 118. John told neither of them what had really happened to save the day. In the end, Rubén wound up alone and the happy youngsters ended up more cramped, while John had no change whatsoever other than being 50,000 pesos poorer. At least John would be rid of some prison rats for the time being. The prison kiosk was stocked again with different drinks. John had Sergio bring him a few liters of lightly carbonated, pomegranate-flavored water and a few more liters of pineapple juice. Another bad day had ended.

Santibáñez was in charge of 118 the next day and he was in a bad mood. Sergio said it was because he was hungry, although he did not ask John for food (a bribe) so what his real problem was remained unclear. What was clear is that he obligated John to go out into the *patio* after he had taken his *encomienda* bags to his cell. While upstairs, Carlos had told John that the *paco* was calling for him, so John left his bags, including his bag of clean clothes that Miami had given him, and went downstairs. He pleaded to Santibáñez that he had meat to put into the freezer but the *paco* did not care and sent him out. Rubén, Ismael, and Miami could not understand the ornery *paco*’s bad attitude, even if it was a growling stomach. Before him, only Castro had been such a jerk and not let John put his food away. Curiously, sycophant Carlos was allowed to put his *encomienda* provisions in the freezer. So the rule was arbitrary and against the *gringo* for some unknown reason. John made a plan with Miami to circumvent the problem prior to being locked up, but as it turned out John was able to run upstairs when *patio* time was over and sort the pork, rice, and golden potatoes into plastic bins, get the dining room keys from Miami, then rush down past Santibáñez and get and get in and put away the food in the community freezer. He heard the *paco* mutter something to Sergio as he passed by but he could not make out what was said. And he quickly returned to his cell without incident.

The other surprises for the day were less melodramatic. Rubén beat both John (who inadvertently gave him his rook) and Ismael once in chess, so he was flying high. Juan paid back the 1,000 pesos he borrowed from John, which John figured he would never see again. The upper heating element in John’s little oven stopped working and Aníbal could not fix it. He asked for some cigarettes for trying, and John gave him six Pall Malls out of the little stash Pamela brought him. It simply did not pay to buy used equipment. Miami suggested that John try getting an *escrito* approved to get a new oven brought in, but not until Monday in order to avoid having to deal with the hungry and mean *paco* Santibáñez. Pamela also had trouble with some *pacos* earlier. The revision line was long to deliver the *encomienda* sacks and they once again prohibited the

entry of Caesar salad dressing and BBQ sauce, as well as raspberry jam. She did get some more stuff into Miami and his sack contained another 3-liter bottle of diet ginger ale for John. He was glad he had two. He was not going to be caught off guard again with nothing to drink. He also had Sergio bring him three more 1.6-liter bottles of lemon-flavored water from the kiosk.

Besides winning the majority of his chess matches, the least surprising thing John did was to have finished *The Skeptical Environmentalist* and started *El Juicio Crítico como Progreso* by Alberto Benegas Lynch, an Austrian economist and philosopher living in Buenos Aires. Likewise unsurprising, that afternoon and evening he and Valentín worked on the Scripture and general words indices for John's short book (with a long subtitle), *Suffering Unjustly: Imprisonment, Wrecked Families, and Property or Wealth Destruction Affecting Christians in Modern Democratic Societies*, which was about ready to be published. Miami, Guillermo, and Ismael were looking to leave comments on Amazon about the English version of volume one of this book, *Bearing the Cross*, which had been discovered by leftists, one of them posting a negative comment without reading it—just to spite John—saying that John had broken the law by firing his pistol and deserved what he got, without commenting in prison life and judicial injustice exposed in the book. Other *reos* knew that what John had written about prison and Chilean justice was true, and those three *reos* in particular were anxious to come to John's defense.

December 20 and 21 are the longest days of the year in the Southern Hemisphere and John was wondering if the added vitamin D he got from the sunshine, or maybe the drier Summer weather, were responsible for the partial improvement in his chronic shoulder pain. His left knee hurt a little less, too. "Maybe it is because I eat fresh fruit most days now and take supplements," he mused. His veggies received on Saturday remained the same, although they lasted less time before spoiling, maybe a day less, and thus had to be eaten faster, meaning going without them longer. Prison was not treating John's health well. For months, his arms and hands were going numb while sleeping or using his cellphone, although more often lately—an ailment easy to fix by changing the arm's position. But the phenomena was occurring more frequently. It was just too annoying holding and typing on a cell phone without any feeling in his fingers.

Out on the *patio*, John and others had other healthrelated issues. "Look, *gringo*, your leg is bleeding," remarked the near-toothless, skinny, and elderly Daniel, who was a regular recipient of John's taffy and *frugalé* ever since moving in with Delfín. He sat on the same shared bench with his crutches every day and watched people. John looked down where he had rolled up his pant leg and, sure enough, a trickle of blood was flowing down where he had scratched too hard. He had not noticed that blood was all over his fingers, too. The bugs were annoying, but John was determined to expose enough skin in order to make more vitamin D. Miami had told him the other day not to scratch too hard but John had not noticed what he had done while dealing with the pests. He was more focused on the fact that the white pages once again looked pink in the bright sunlight. John finished the last couple pages in the chapter then walked over to the *pesebre* where Miami was still washing clothes. He plopped his calf up on the square metal edge and cleaned himself off, while Miami lectured him a little more about the evils of scratching. John had also had a couple days where his blood pressure was down around 95/60, although it had recently gone back to normal (120/75). Of course, nothing is ever really "normal" in terrestrial hell. Everything is perverse, uncertain, and despairing.

At noon, Castro (who was in charge of 118 that day) came into the dining hall and asked if anyone had had colitis. Rubén said that he had it a few days ago, and so the newly prevention-minded Castro sent everyone to their cells two hours early. John had only played and won two chess games in the limited *patio* span and Ismael had just started his workout. No matter: There was considerable concern in the prison about a new Coronavirus outbreak along with other communicable diseases—especially when visitation was going on and the semi-fascist health ministry was breathing down the *gendarmería*'s neck. As John entered the staircase inside 118, Castro told him to start wearing his mask.“OK,” he muttered. Few in 118 did and John was convinced that masks probably did more harm than good. It was only after he awoke from his afternoon nap that John realized that with all the rush to get upstairs he had forgotten to take some of his meat and potatoes from out of the freezer. He would have to eat *quesadillas* or peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for dinner.

In other news, Carlos reported that his court hearing went badly, as expected. It must be really hard to defend his having had oral sex with his eight year old daughter. Miami shared some interesting childhood stories with John (which Cristián, quietly drawing, overheard) about his experiences falling into a recently dug, thirty-five-foot-deep septic hole, getting hit by a car while tugging a kite, and finding a solid gold watch on the street. He was a lucky, accident-prone, hospital-bound adolescent. Prior to that conversation, Juan talked about his drug dealing and further expanded on his plan to get into a *CET* and other semi-parole situations. He also said that certain alcoholic beverages could be made through a fifteen-day fermentation process using apples, rice, etc., without yeast, resulting in an elixir called *chicha*. Since alcohol is a substitute for drugs, it was not surprising that the *gendarmes* who sold drugs would be against it. One could learn a lot about basic economics in prison. Not all was bad though. One positive highlight was also achieved: John finished the book of Numbers and thus had finally completed the entire Bible, after thirteen months of confinement.

Penailillo was in charge of 118 the next day and *escritos* to bring in meat for Christmas and New Year's Day cookouts had to be submitted. Since this was the last day before Viña del Mar and Valparaíso went back into full quarantine, Pamela had to run to the grocery store and get two kilograms of meat for John and, as a favor, another two for Rubén (who would transfer her the money). To come see John on the 25th and then to drop *encomienda* off on the 26th she would have to use up her weekly allotments of government permissions to leave the house. Good thing she was able to get John's prescription medications and 80,000 pesos in cash submitted to the *gendarmería* service window that same day. Since the maximum cash amount per person was 40,000 pesos, she put one envelope in Miami's name, who readily gave John the cash. John needed to make sure he had sufficient cash on hand to pay bribes or to pay for services (or even a cell change). At any rate, it was a heavier prison-related week for dutiful Pamela, who also had to endure four-hour, round-trip, local bus rides to the prison and back. Local bus fare was just over 1,000 pesos versus 13,000 pesos or more for Uber. So she opted for the bus sometimes, even if it took four times longer.

She had hoped to be able to bring John their toaster oven from home but the *gendarme* officers informed Penailillo that they were prohibited—even with an *escrito*. Thus, she would have to see if Panchito could bring it in along with pepper, BBQ sauce, Caesar salad dressing, a spatula, and perhaps one or two other “prohibited” items. Nevertheless, John continued to do favors for the *gendarmes*. Major Toledo sent Lieutenant Díaz to 118 with some more of her daughter's English

homework papers to complete, which he gladly did. Penailillo, Rubén, Cristián, Sergio, and probably other *reos* knew he was doing the work and even timed him to make sure he could do it, as he claimed, in less than ten minutes. It would have taken five if he did not also have to correct the English teacher's prose on the assignment sheet. (Chilean English teachers were about as good in English as American Spanish teachers were in Spanish, that is, not very.) He did not mind doing things for *gendarme* officers, who generally treated him well. He was not sure, however, how it helped the girl who would get a perfect score and yet know little English. (Speaking of English lessons, there had been no sign of Necúlman for a couple weeks. Maybe he had given up?)

There was not much going on in 118. Four more *machucados* with *dominical* privileges arrived in 118A. John spoke to a couple of them from 114 who were intrigued to be in the presence of such a "famous" man. He read some, but less than normal, and played only two games of chess. He and Miami strategized some over what comment topics to post about on the Amazon website with respect to the first volume of *Bearing the Cross*. Miami also wrote up an *escrito* for Moroni, requesting that he be moved to the Los Andes jail, which was much closer to a dialysis center and hospital. It was overcast all morning, knocking out Miami's laundry business for the day, and John found it odd that his blood pressure had dropped from 124/75 (perfect) before roll call to 103/66 (a little low) after returning to his cell at 1:40 p.m. Maybe his medication kicked in during the morning? At any rate, John was quite content to have a less eventful day in "paradise."

The following couple of days were a little nervewracking as Cisternas announced that many more *machucados* (seventeen according to Sergio) would be coming to 118A and 118. Although trivial, John had been corrected about the 118A building. Apparently the upper floor which housed most of the *dominicales* was technically called 118B, rather than the upstairs of 118A. No matter what title was given to it, the building was bug-ridden and full of *machucados*—several of them infirm and immobile. New arrivals would eventually spill over into the 118 building for lack of space.

During the lineup on the 23rd (with eyes glued on John), Cisternas said that those living alone should expect to have cellmates soon. Evidently the "permanent" bribe John recently gave Cisternas (through Sergio) was only good for a couple weeks. But John also realized that space was tight and shoving another seventeen men into 118 meant all cells would be full. Rubén received a new *reo* the night before, Richard, a relatively tall, knife-wielding robber (age 40), was *mozo* to the *comandante* (even though he could not remember the Colonel's name). His boss had accordingly ordered Cisternas to give Richard a private cell. That raised tension levels for both Rubén, who might now get kicked out of his "posh" cell, and John, who might have to receive him. Miami told John not to worry about it since Guillermo had gotten the nod to be chef *mozo* and would thus very likely be returning to 118. When he did, Sergio would certainly direct him to John's cell. Even if a rude *machucado* showed up for a week or so, he could be moved out and swapped with Guillermo. The same would be true of Rubén. Still, John was displeased by the prospect of a *machucado* living with him. Life was bad enough without adding to it a lot of what he had experienced while sick in 109 in July: cellmates who use drugs, speak loudly and incessantly, play loud music or television, among other distasteful things, and who steal from you. In the meantime, life went on "normally" for John in 118, who followed his daily routines and played chess or read. The days were gloomy and a bit cold for early Summer.

Officers Leal and Ortega were in 118 on Christmas Eve to explain the circular that was posted the day before, announcing that the visitation scheduled for Christmas Day would be held on the 29th. The new city quarantine “phase two” (downgraded from “phase three”) semi-lockdown prohibited travel on weekends and holidays, so visitation was switched to a weekday (Tuesday) and the time altered to 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Most went on with their daily grind in 118, which now included the new faces of the rough customers that came in from 114 and perched all day under the open *bodega*. Many of 118’s regulars were not around most of the day. Like Aaron, Ismael was working on something outside the *módulo*, or at least outside the *patio*, and was seldom seen during the day.

Late that afternoon, surprisingly, John ’s publisher, *Editorial Conservadora*, decided not to publish the Spanish version of volume one of this book, curiously citing it as being too crude, wordy, repetitive, and sexually explicit. Recounting the repetitive monotony of prison life and its sordid characters is bound to be far different than telling a Disney tale for teenagers, but *Bearing the Cross* was hardly sexually explicit or crude. Something else was going on and the criticisms were merely coving up the *real* reason. Pamela and Álvaro thought the real reason was that its head guy, Henry Boys Loeb, was running for a seat on the constitutional commission and any association with John would be detrimental. The editor-critic actually cited an article in the daily *La Tercera* that falsely accused John of being a racist, a white supremacist, a fugitive, and an aggressor, among other absurd things, without any basis other than scurrilous leftist balderdash, and the editor was worried about Henry’s public image. Valentín, Rubén, and Miami agreed with Álvaro and Pamela. Bob just thought he was a jerk. They all knew John was not anything like what the newspaper accused him of being. John looked forward to being out of prison and thus being able to defend himself against all the poppycock flying about. He also had personal misgivings about publicly moralistic Henry, whom he thought did not keep his word, and decided to cut all ties with him in a friendly manner. Álvaro said the search for a new Chilean publisher would begin on Monday. Miami suggested publishing it in Argentina instead.

The Supreme Court hearing was once again postponed until the following Thursday, for the same reasons. John had to grin and bear with the news, knowing it was tactically for the best, even if he had to endure more time in prison. Luis, the *ranchero* missing his two front teeth, had kindly brought John some specially cooked meats and potatoes mixed with corn to his cell, which the rancheros made with ingredients leftover from the officer’s feast. It was an unexpected act of kindness from a *machucado*, and John took note of it.

On Christmas Day, with Castro back in 118 ’s driver’s seat, no new cellmates had yet arrived, but tension was still high. Yet the usual routines went on, with Miami washing John’s clothes, everyone doing their chores, and no special food or events. Christmas Day was no different than any other day in jail. However, one newly arrived *machucado* (Sergio) was cutting branches in the male avocado tree that was now blooming, thus eliminating the fruit. The dolt did not know that fruit trees do not get pruned at the beginning of Summer. John mentioned it to him and Ricardo, who was helping with the trash barrel below, but they both insisted that there was no fruit. Miami did not want to comment, perhaps wanting to avoid trouble. In the end, everyone resigned themselves to the loss. Miami and Rubén talked with John (over their now-customary Friday lunch) about the incident with Henry and the loss of a publisher, noting their various criticisms of Chilean culture and its self-centered politicians.

Miami said that all but one of his “good” friends prior to incarceration had abandoned him. Chileans were often that way. John mentioned that the same had *not* happened to him, except to a very limited extent, since he not only had lots of visitors but many of his good Chilean friends were sticking with him through thick and thin. He thought of Álvaro, Hermógenes, Valentín, Daniel, Obed, Jano, Ricardo, Jorge, Sebastian, Gino, Claudio, Pablo, Eduardo, Edwin, Criss, Alejandro, Leónidas, Luis, Dusan, and Patricio, just to name some of the more earnest ones, not to mention many friends from America and other countries: Jim, Joe, Bob, Bert, Patrick, Greg, Eric, Matt, Frank, Ken, Steve, Davinci, Thompson, Pedro, Mark, John, and many others. John was blessed with many earnest friends and supporters, besides his son David and cousin Dan. Miami said that, surprisingly, he had made more good friends in prison than without—men who would take a bullet for him. John had not had that experience, even if Miami and Ismael would continue being friends after all of them were released.

Not surprisingly, being released was the main thing on John’s mind. He always missed his kids and grandkids on holidays. He did speak with his wife and several of his children and grandchildren (so long as the connection permitted doing so)—David, Grace, William, Aidan, Rachel (who relayed his greetings to Paul)—in Louisville, Kentucky and Greenville, South Carolina. His pre-Alzheimer’s mother (91) in California was impossible to reach, as was his son Joshua in Phoenix. He and Valentín also worked on formatting his book, *Suffering Unjustly*. In terms of calls to other friends, he spoke a long time with Jim in New Zealand the night before and Bob both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. It was encouraging to have good friends and some stimulating conversation. He almost forgot that he was locked in a cell during those times. 118 would have its Christmas cookout on Sunday the 27th. Pamela had already bought two kilograms of meat for John and Rubén, and would put them in *encomienda* the next day. Miami was getting more for himself and John from the prison kitchen.

Pamela said the *encomienda* line was far longer than usual and the bags did not reach 118 until after 2 p.m.—over an hour later than usual. The *reos* thus stayed out on the *patio* a bit longer, giving Castro more opportunities to bark at the recently arrived *machucados*. However, Castro did not open the cell doors until after 10 a.m., nearly an hour and a half late, so John had not gotten to read his book with the shorter yard time. Still, he managed to sweep five straight chess games against Rubén and talked to Miami and Juan some—the latter being surprisingly adroit at quoting the Bible. Juan said he dreamed predictive dreams (like the exact day he would be released from jail in 2015), and had some loose Pentecostal affiliation, but did not practice the Evangelical faith. In terms of food, the long *encomienda* line made the *pacos* weary and Pamela was able to get bars of soap, sauces, garlic powder, and raspberry jam in for John that had been rejected by other *pacos* in recent weeks. She also got all the meat through to Rubén and John for the upcoming cookout, and some laundry detergent and flavored tea for Miami. There were no cell or cellmate changes. After lock up, John and Valentín got a lot more done on formatting and indexing *Suffering Unjustly*.

The next day was similar to the previous one except that the *machucados* from 118A ran the cookout. Instead of a fork, meats cooking over the half-barrel grill were flipped by the fingers of men who, by and large, chose not to throw their toilet paper into the toilet bowl after being used. John and others figured that danger to health was probably not too great since the flames would wipe out any germs. But use of those same fingers on potato salad and raw vegetable dishes was another story, compounded by the fact that the *machucados*—nine in total—used the serving

fork to take mouthfuls and then put the fork back in the serving dish. The *reos* from 118A/B were saliva-sharers. Only John, Rubén, Cristián, and Richard were present from 118. The others either ate privately upstairs in their cells (like Miami and Luchito) or at the sycophants' barbecue (which included Castro) out in the parking area and shielded by the closed yard door. Only 118's privileged *reos* got to eat there. The *machucados* were kind to John, asking him to eat meat, *choripan* (grilled sausage on French rolls), and vegetables. He did so, and also donated his boneless chicken breasts (that Pamela had fetched for him) to the cause. John was not only worried about the saliva-tainted potato salad and *pebre* (chopped onions, tomatoes, and parsley that Juan made), he was concerned that some of the chicken he ate was not well-cooked. It had some soft, slimy spots. He really should not have been eating *machucado* food given his susceptibility to illness but he did so to be friendly and sociable. As it turned out, he faced no adverse effects, thanks be to God.

One of the thinner, younger (33) *machucados*, Michael, said before all the *reos* that he was a friend of Luis Ahumada, the delinquent who had been hit in the thigh by a ricochet from John's gun, after participating front-and-center in the human barricade against him. Another bigger, younger *machucado* from 118B, Sergio, pointed out that he could have really been badly hurt by John's 40-caliber round. John's reply made them all chuckle when he said that Ahumada lied under oath and was lucky that John had no intention of killing him as an assailant. He fired at the ground instead of directly at Ahumada after the scoundrel's pal Sebastián Valdés opened John's door with the intention of "lynching" him. Michael said he would corroborate John's story with Ahumada in order to hear both sides. The *machucados* were further amazed after they asked what line of work John was in. He was unsure whether they could even comprehend his lengthy response.

The truth of the matter is that the *machucados* treated John as if he was a quasi-celebrity. It was not clear why, however. Perhaps it was for his social status, or because he was a *gringo*, or because he was now famous in Chile. As Michael said, "I can't wait to tell people that I know you." John was also popular for sharing daily his phenomenal sandwiches, *quesadillas*, candy, chocolate chip cookies, and barbecue potato chips. People out on the *patio* (the non-sycophants) almost got to the point of expecting it. Maybe their friendliness was a mixture of all those things.

At any rate, the next day, lawyer Guillermo said that the Supreme Court hearing would likely take place on Thursday. John's thoughts once again turned to the possibility of going home. He was glad to have not gotten sick from the likely contaminated food at the cookout, even though he did not follow Rubén's advice about how to counter salmonella: "Drink hot tea without sugar; that will get rid of it." John had taken Ruben in eleven out of twelve chess games over the past two days but the tea comment seemed to lessen the glory of victory over that mental giant, even if beating him had entailed a more challenging feat than wiping the floor with Juan twice. Barboa had been in charge of 118 in place of Castro and everything was calm, with no cell or cellmate changes—even though John was always waiting for the other shoe to drop.

He looked forward to seeing his wife the next day during the first visitation in nearly nine months. John dug out a face mask so that he would be allowed to go to visitation. Pamela could bring nothing in with her besides her identification card, so preparing for the visit was easy. In the meantime, John and Valentín, with a little of Bob's help, continued finishing up the formatting, final textual corrections, and indexing of *Suffering Unjustly*, and Joe started working

on the cover so it could be published on New Year's Day. Álvaro was searching for a new Chilean publisher for the first volume of this book, *Bearing the Cross*. Guillermo had also written John a note, having received notification that the prosecutor was seeking a seven-year jail sentence for being in contempt of court. He needed a witness to verify his story and at the moment he had none. 111's cookout the next day was delicious and abundant, providing some momentary solace in otherwise terrible circumstances.

Chapter VII Glorify God in the Day of Visitation

December 29th was 118's scheduled visitation day, and only 118 regulars John, Cristián, Mauricio, and Francisco (Pancho) went, along with Marcelo and a few other *ranchero mozos*, plus Jorge and Patricio (another disabled guy on crutches) from 118A. There were twelve *reos* in total. They arrived late, led by Cisternas, and then had to go back and wait in the *módulo* until the visitors arrived. They thus lost about forty minutes of visitation, especially John, who had to wait on the *patio* after making a special request to Cisternas to go to his cell and brush his teeth, where he was forgotten. The rest went on before him. All but one of the visitors were women, most of them wives or girlfriends. A smiling (behind her mask) and gleeful Pamela was waiting for John, seated on a white stool set at one of the ten new, round, white, plastic tables that the *gendrane*'s had bought. Hers was located right next to the entrance. Other than her Coronavirus mask, she was nicely dressed with new sparkling silver shoes (bought on sale in Reñaca), and with just the right amount of makeup. She was a sight for sore eyes for John, who missed her dearly. The couple had not seen each other, and of course had no marital intimacy, for what seemed like an eternity. Each table and pair of stools was set in a chalk box made of white tape, with two taped Xs placed where the stools were to go. There was a gel alcohol dispenser on the wall. The visitors were to sit across from each other. The noise level was so loud that even Pamela had a hard time hearing and understanding. Two rotating guards, mostly officers, took turns watching from the doorway, along with the cameras always focused on the room, with *pacos* keeping an eye on things during visitation.

Pamela had arrived by Uber before 10 a.m. (there was confusion about the start time, with the website saying one thing and the *reos* in 118 being told another, the latter being correct). Her ingress went without incident other than that the line to get inside was atrociously long and slowmoving, mostly comprised of low-class or *flaite* women connected to 115's *machucados* that had visitation scheduled the same day. 115 was the *módulo* assigned to accused men who were repeat offenders of the same crime. If they had committed a different crime than previously they would go to 111. Nonetheless, 115 was one of the dirtiest and most violent *módulos* in the prison. Still, Pamela managed to get along fine with their women, chatting and exchanging useful information with one another. She went through the humiliating motions before the *paca* in charge of inspecting visitors—lifting up her top and non-padded bra (since padding could be used to smuggle stuff in), then dropping her drawers and squatting in order for the *paca* to see if a cell phone would fall out of an orifice. None did. She brought nothing inside besides her identification card and some facial tissue. She was not allowed to bring John anything, other than dropping off an envelope for John containing 40,000 pesos at the service window prior to entering, and she could take nothing from him back out. Having passed inspection, she knew right where to go, even if it had been nearly nine months since her last visit.

John did not know what to expect, other than that he could bring nothing to the visit. He thus had to hide his cash under the insoles of his dress shoes. He could not leave all of it in his cell where it might get stolen. He brought his light jacket and that was it, laying it on the table after he arrived. The rest of his valuables had to be hidden as well as possible inside his cell. As it turned out, no one got into his cell to steal things, and no one searched him. He could have brought a book with him for Pamela to take out and no one would have noticed. He was wearing the same

violet plaid collared shirt he wore during his trial and olive pants. Other than being made to come back late, all went well.

John and Pamela were eager to touch each other, as were all other couples in the room. Soon the no-kissing, no-hugging, and no-touching rule was widely being broken, as some couples moved stools off the Xs and sat closer to one another. Doing so was obviously natural, despite the cruel orders of the health ministry to the contrary. The *gendarmes* seemed to understand the need for physical contact and affection and were quite lax on the rule's enforcement. John had not felt the soft female touch from his wife or any other woman for so long—not even a handshake—that feeling Pamela's soft skin was almost startling. Early on, Pamela said, "These masks are so stupid." She moved her stool closer, facing away from the camera, and pulled down her mask. As a good libertarian Baptist, she had every intention of breaking the Draconian no-physical-contact rule. John took his mask off his nose (which otherwise fogged up his glasses) and on occasion lifted it off his mouth, or pulled it down around his neck. Their first kiss was with masks on. The second through fifth—the last one occurring standing and hugging just as they were leaving the visitation—were with bare lips and happy, even sensual affection. It did the marriage good to have such an encounter.

In reality, there was no risk of punishment for violating the rules, as sternly stated prior to visitation. The *pacos* came into the room two or three times to speak with a *reo* and his visitor, but no sanctions or reprisals were applied. *Comandante (Mayor)* Carla Toledo passed by John and Pamela's table, and John warmly introduced her to his wife, saying how happy he was to help her daughter with her English homework, and how he had had fun talking and joking about language nuances with her and the other officers one day. She concurred and exchanged a few niceties with Pamela. John enjoyed a good relationship with the *gendarmes*, especially the officers, with much mutual respect. For a while, the *gendarmes* would be watching right at the doorway near John and Pamela, but the couple was bold, sitting closer, holding hands, inspecting each other's skin, surgery scars, hair, and flab, lifting masks, and even kissing. The *gendarmes* did not mind or scold them. In fact, they even walked out of view so as to give people more privacy. John was not surprised. He at least saw no reason why they would bother him and Pamela.

One-legged Jorge and his girlfriend were even more daring, seen by John and others making out in the corridor or the staircase across from the entrance where no cameras were present. Marcelo and Isabel were about as bold as John and Pamela at their respective tables. One *mozo* saw the affection and got up to ask the *paco* if he could practice some with his mother, just as others were doing with theirs, and he got the go ahead. Back at 118, Rubén and Miami were delighted to hear the good news from John about displays of affection during visitation. Sergio heard the report and said that each one would have to be responsible if he got infected with Covid-19.

Nonetheless, John and Pamela were not the least bit worried, looking at all the hype as a mere government control technique. John had Covid-19 bad, along with pneumonia, and almost died. But he caught infections in general quite easily and believed that he had since built up immunity to Covid-19—and the so called new strains were not as dire a curse as the statist media were reporting. Moreover, Pamela might well have had Coronavirus without symptoms. They were not going to live their lives in constant fear of a disease with a mortality rate similar to annual influenza. Pamela remarked, "We can't stop the entire planet on account of this illness." John

agreed. The whole lockdown policy smacked of fascism and the vaccines looked to be even more sinister. Neither of them wore masks other than at visitation or when required by places entered while running errands.

Pamela had her ultrasound examination day after next, but had been feeling less pain after cutting cheese and yoghurt out of her diet. She would head back to the doctor in January. Jana had made a doctor's appointment in Viña del Mar at the end of January, too, so that she would be allowed to get a pass to leave Osorno and come back to stay with Pamela. It was a nice trick. John and his supporters still had hope that he would be home by then as well, trusting the Lord to deliver him from false accusers and biased judges seeking to satisfy the public and media by doing him harm unjustly.

Rubén and Miami sent Pamela their regards. They had become beneficiaries of her grocery-shopping services. Rubén finally got correct change and paid John for the beef Pamela bought and part of the Uber fare (ignoring the local bus fare to make a special trip for him), leaving the chicken and the rest of the Uber costs to Miami, whom John never charged. Of course, Miami washed John's clothes and even pulled a hip pocket liner off in order to sew it behind a tear in one of John's pant legs. John's clothes were wearing out. Miami could end up being a good friend and, like John, he was eager to give and do good works for others. John had no problem giving to a guy like that, recalling the words of Christ in Acts 20:35, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

The last two days of the year featured Castro, then Bustos, in charge of 118, but neither man got John's blood pressure up. In fact, both *pacos* were hardly seen. On the 31st, John's morning blood pressure stood at 101/73 and after walking upstairs from the *patio* at 2 p.m., and putting his things away, along with preparing a bowl of sliced-apple-and-cheap-yoghurt, it was only up to 113/71. John was still alone in his cell, too, and he thought he had best count his blessings.

New Year 's celebrations and fireworks shows had been cancelled due to Coronavirus concerns, although some beaches, like Quintero (thirty minutes north of Reñaca), were still apparently full of people. There was no special food in 118 either, besides a big tray of unseasoned, well-done *ranchito* beef set out in the dining room; just another monotonous day in prison. John gave away most of his food, cookies, candy, and chips. He ate one ham, cheese, and lettuce sandwich he had made the night before while Miami offered half of the other to Delfín, who refused it (he liked those round or ball suckers sold at the kiosk), and so Miami offered it to Rubén instead while out on the *patio*, who gobbled it down. (John had by then become a famous sandwich and burrito/*quesadilla* maker.) The other half came apart, falling open-faced on the floor of the dining room, obligating John to retract his offer to give it to someone. But Cristián jumped in and said he would still gladly eat it. Besides bodybuilding and eating somewhat rotten bananas without a second thought, he shared in common with Ismael a willingness to eat food that had fallen on the filthy floor.

The year ended with just a couple complaints. Moroni said that 40,000 pesos were missing from his coat pocket and from his cell in 118A. His cellmate Juan denied taking it and Rubén, Miami, and Delfín could not believe that someone walked in and stole it. But John realized that it could have been Juan or one of the *machucados* from the floor above. He had lived around Rufo and the *machucados* from 105 long enough to know that they would avail themselves of someone

else's property without a second thought. John had a complaint of his own: yet another one of his white chair's seats was partly broken through. He made a scene about it, too, telling the *machucados* from 118B that the chairs were never broken until reos arrived in 118B. He was generous with everyone, both with food and letting other *reos* borrow dish soap and utensils, but he did not like people who destroyed private property—a sure sign of communist-infected thinking and action. There was no good reason for destroying someone else's property. But what could one expect from *machucados*?

Michael had taken two of John's white chairs to his cell, citing his need to have a place to sit. That would be fine, John thought, if he could be counted on to take care of them—which he could not. Another *machucado* from 118B, David, told John that chairs get broken up in other *módulos* and, therefore, John should just bring some others in. John liked neither the expense nor the notion of putting his wife through the necessary motions just because of some wayward, careless, destructive *machucados*. So Michael brought the best one down and John carried it and the partly busted one up to his cell. He only used them during visitation and no one knew when that might start again. When his friend Joe had bought them for John, who had to go through the hassle of getting an *escrito*, i.e., a stamped-and-signed written permission to bring them in, he thought to get the cheapest available. The external logic was, "Why spend a lot on stuff going to prison anyway?" But the two brown plastic armchairs he bought at twice the price did not get broken up. The price may have been double but it was justified since delivery to the jail was a hassle, and somewhat costly. Pamela did not know how to drive and the chairs could not go on the local bus. A delivery service was required, While Joe meant well, he turned out to be using the wrong logic, given the careless and irresponsible nature of the *machucados*. It is better to buy higher quality for stuff going into the prison. Upon opening the community freezer, too, John thought someone from 118A/B had taken one or two of the prepared meat-and-golden-potatoes meals, stored in plasticware, although he was not certain.

Due to work demands, Valentín was still a little behind schedule correcting errors John found in *Suffering Unjustly*. John was going to comb through that book again anyway, so no big deal. With Dusan's help, Joe was nearly done with the covers for both the English and Spanish versions of that book. Once again, John was thankful for these (and many other) good friends who were willing to help. John had also made contact with Sergio Picero (through their mutual friend Hermógenes Pérez de Arce), a seasoned editorial assistant with long-standing Zig-Zag publishers in Santiago. He spoke with his Editorial Director Alejandra Schmidt and they thought that John's story in *Bearing the Cross* would be of interest. She would reach out to John in the coming week. That was good news! With Bob's help, John also sent off a proposal to publish that same book with Editorial Sudamericana in Buenos Aires. Thus, some progress was being made in getting John's books published in Spanish. Publishing the English versions of both books was already well underway under the Alertness Books label through Amazon.com. Miami was delighted to hear all the publishing news and also hoped to get some hard data on salaries paid to judicial branch employees (through the Transparency Act) that would help bolster volume two of *Bearing the Cross*.

The big news of the day was John's Supreme Court hearing. The hearing that was "sure" to happen, didn't.

Chapter VIII Let None of You Suffer

New Year 's Day in jail: what a treat! Cisternas was in charge of 118 and all was quiet. Hardly anyone was out on the *patio* after roll call besides Daniel and Delfín. John, Rubén, Miami, Juan, Cristián were inside the dining area. The latter drew his newborn boy; the others played chess and/or poker. Only John read. The other ten had gone off to do other things in their cells in 118A/B or inside 118, making only very occasional appearances to get food or play some poker. Good thing, too, since John had very little candy and chips left to give out and his ham and cheese sandwiches were pretty scrawny (typical for Friday, the day before *encomienda*). John was happy for the relative quiet and normal blood pressure 121/75. Prison is not a place where one normally covets excitement, which is typically associated with violence. Indeed, the day was so monotonous that John hardly killed a single fly—except the one he crushed between pages 400 and 401 of the book he was reading while sitting out in the sunshine. The sun broke through the typical marine-layer overcast at 1 p.m. and John would have stayed out longer than ten minutes (in order to get more vitamin D) had Cisternas not ordered everyone to their cells fifteen minutes early. During the morning, no one made mention of doing a second cookout, so John sliced off more steaks from the beef Pamela had brought him and cooked some of it medium rare in his oven, gave a steak to Miami, and put a few small steaks back in the freezer. Rubén assured John that there would be no second cookout, which was just as well. No need to run the risk of catching some bug from the *machucados*. Otherwise, it was just more chess, reading, and working on his books. Lawyer Fabiola forwarded a notice posted online from the Supreme Court clerk saying that John's case had been listed as "preferential" for Thursday, January 7, 2021. Could it be?

The rest of the long weekend was relaxed, with Cisternas in charge of 118. Actually, every day in jail was part of a "long weekend" that never seemed to end. It is a holiday in hell of sorts, not necessarily full of torment (albeit that, too, happens from time to time), always filled with uncertainty, perils, boredom, monotony, restlessness, unfulfilled desires or dissatisfaction, lack of joy, and the absence of love. Those elements are manifest in the food, one's clothing, one's quarters, and one's social relationships. There is simply nothing good one may find in such a place, wherein one trudges out his existence. While it is certain that one will eventually emerge older, it is unclear that he will emerge necessarily wiser, stronger, or better prepared. Like hell, prison is about cruelty and suffering loss, affecting both the *reo* and his family, friends, and (if he has any) supporters. It is like holding on to a long rope attached to one's life preserver ring, while floating in the midst of a hurricane. "'There is no peace,' says the Lord, 'for the wicked'" (Isaiah 48:22; 57:21). The next time you fling a half-crushed fly, moth, or spider into the toilet bowl and watch it helplessly swirl down into oblivion, remember that the reality and expectations of the hapless *machucado* are little different. The imprisoned man exists for the moment, controlled by forces he can hardly influence, destined to be the devil's plaything one second, then hurled against a rock the next by some irate and incorrigible child. The only great difference between prison and hell—other than the obvious differences in pain level, number of visitors, and required length of stay—is that no innocent people will be in hell.

Each *módulo*'s level of hell also differs. On the one hand, for example, while 118 was relatively quiet over the long weekend, Guillermo's cell and others' cells in 111 were raided again the day before, with ten men hauled off to punishment cells in *módulo* 112 for cocaine possession and

trafficking or for fighting. On the other hand, the worst thing John had faced lately was Aníbal griping about him not sweeping up the *patio* trash (i.e., someone else stepping in and doing it instead) and someone stealing his serrated table knife. Juan later confessed to borrowing it out of John's backpack, which was commonly practiced by *reos* needing to prepare their morning bread or who needed dish soap to clean up—taking advantage of John's generosity. He said he had given it to Rubén, who could not find it in his backpack. So John was without that knife for the time being, but it hardly affected him (blood pressure normal at 124/81). He, Rubén, and Miami enjoyed a little pizza and stellar turkey, cheese, avocado, and tomato sandwiches that John made from the ingredients supplied by Pamela.

Good thing for the latter two men, too, since *colación* (breakfast), *ranchito* and *dieta* were simply appalling. Nearly all the *reos* were complaining: white bread, margarine, and some cookies or *membrillo* (a sweet spread made from a type of Chilean tree fruit) with tea for breakfast (*colación*), noodles or rice with hot dogs or pieces of cooked rotten meat, although occasionally lentils or soup would come. Miami said he could not eat the meat at all. John was unaffected by the bad prison food. He stopped eating it months ago, hence eliminating his bouts with diarrhea. His lifeline was Pamela, who kept him stocked with food every Saturday. Others came to rely on her, too, and (as noted earlier) many men appreciated John handing out or sharing cookies, candy, chips, sandwiches, and other food items. Simply put, prison food reeked of hell, and only those with outside connections could avoid being contaminated by it.

There was also consternation over chess. Most were playing the game or watching it like a sporting event. Rubén typically got trounced by John, but would win on average one time out of fifteen (usually due to a silly error or oversight by “bored” John). That happened today and almost happened a rare second time. However, John finished off Rubén in an unexpected way even though he should have been beaten by him. Rubén’s loud gloating and strutting turned to grievous remorse. His pride was crushed and he went about clamoring, “Woe is me!” He had played around He had played around 120-28. He was so shell-shocked that he lost the next two, but did manage to sweep three from struggling Juan and newbie Cristián, which served as a sort of consolation prize. Juan, who was just aching to beat Rubén again, always bet him 1,000 pesos, too, and had a net loss of 5,000 pesos to Rubén. Still, his pride was hurt and his own arrogance brought him down.

John took it all in stride. He never gloated over beating anyone in chess. He had grown up with chess and his mentors said that gloating or bragging were rude. After his victories, he sat in the sunshine, getting his thirty minutes of vitamin D and reading *El Juicio Crítico Como Progresso*. That book was surprising in that John agreed with nearly everything it said, other than darwinian evolution. Both he and the author, Alberto Benegas Lynch, Jr., were pro-life libertarians. Back in the cell, John simply hated preparing bath water in the spigoted bucket and lifting it into place prior to bathing. He did enjoy working on his books, however. *Suffering Unjustly* was nearly done, after having experienced some formatting and spelling setbacks. To that end, Valentín, Joe, and Bob had been real godsends, helping John complete the books. Other books would be coming out as time went on. Other than Historic Baptist meetings, John did not have much contact the outside world, although he was somewhat sad to hear that his son David had cut off his courtship with Jordan. “She’s not the right one for me.” Nevertheless, John had liked Jordan and felt sorry for both of them. But even if he could not be happy at present, he hoped that David could find marital happiness soon.

Castro was in charge of 118 the next couple of days but all was remarkably peaceful, with the *reos* going about their normal routines. The Covid-19 quarantine restriction was upgraded to phase 2 in the Viña del Mar and Valparaíso area, meaning that all *dominical* (Sunday home) visits were suspended. Hence, there would be more *machucados* (a word roughly meaning "hammered" or "smashed" ones) from 118B on the *patio* than normal. Chess was pretty much the talk of the *patio*, with everyone trying to humble arrogant Rubén. John had little trouble doing so, winning a high percentage of their games (as usual), but Ismael could only manage to tie him, winning one then losing the next, and Juan was squarely beaten throughout their matches. Christian played against John just before it was time for the *reos* to return to their cells. John had been teaching the young man to play and he was improving every day. His cellmate Ismael jumped in during the instruction and said he would teach him better than John, since he would teach him technique—whatever that meant. Cristián seemed to ignore him, deferring to John as a "master."

At the end of the match, Cristián said to John, "I know you are a Christian and I want to ask you for something." He wanted John to pray for his son. The newborn was sickly and having trouble breathing. John replied, "Here's how I pray for others who have needs but are not Christians. I ask God to save you, your wife, and your son from your sins and then I pray for the healing of the boy's body." He continued, "What would be the point of praying for bodily healing alone if he would spend the rest of his eternity in hell along with his parents?" Cristián and his son needed the Savior. He was sick with sin and needed to go to the good physician, Jesus Christ, for help. Christian then had some questions for John about how he could be saved. John explained that he needed to recognize that he was a sinner and the only remedy he had was to flee to Jesus Christ and ask Him for forgiveness for his sins. He explained that God would at that time freely grant him salvation. It required repentance and faith on his and his wife's part. He went on to explain the way in which a saved person lives, with a need for constant repentance for his sin over his lifetime. However, coming to Christ was the means of obtaining salvation immediately, gaining justification by grace through faith alone, in the sight of God. John then gave Christian a number of Bible references to look up during the evening: Isaiah 55:1-2 and 6-7, Romans 10:9, 1 John 1:8-9, and John 3:16-17. Christian was (momentarily) obviously serious in his inquiry; indeed, one could see from his face that he was not fooling around. Ismael looked on as if he had some interest in what John was sharing but said nothing. He was not walking with the Lord still, and obviously had not shared the Gospel with his cellmate. Cristián had seen John's generosity, Bible reading, attitude, and actions in the dining hall for several weeks and had decided that he was a serious, committed Christian. John was happy to help the young man and prayed for him, his wife, and his son that afternoon.

John was happy to share physical as well as spiritual goods. He continued his almost daily sharing of *quesadillas*—ham and cheese *quesadillas* over the last two mornings—with Miami, Rubén, Ismael, and Cristián. At lunchtime, he shared half of his sandwiches, chips, and cookies with some of the same group, along with giving some flavored tea bags to Miami. The chips and soft candies, like usual, went to an even wider group. Yet, some *reos* were left out.

Michael cried out loud to John on the *patio*, who was reading and getting his thirty-minute vitamin D fix for the day, saying he needed a loan so he could get a few things. "I am not in the lending business," John replied, "but I will share my lunch with you." The skinny, younger man said he was not interested in that. Shortly thereafter, John walked into Michael's cell in 118B,

where he was lying down, talking on his cellphone, and offered him some Doritos, which he refused. John then handed him 2,000 pesos in cash, which, at first, Michael refused to take. He finally did so after John insisted and Michael said he would pay John back shortly. “This is not a loan,” said John. It was a small amount of money—not enough to buy drugs—and yet still served a gesture of generosity and goodwill from a man now evidently highly respected by the most other inmates for his chess-playing abilities, culture and reading habits, and religious and academic knowledge. John and Pamela believed that the money spent on food and small cash gifts was wellspent—like an inexpensive hell insurance policy—so long as it continued to keep John in the favor of all the *machucados*.

As John prepared to walk upstairs at 2:20 p.m., Michael yelled out, “Which cell do you live in, *gringo*?” He pointed to his window, then Michael went on to state that he would like to live with John. John remarked he was content to live alone. *Machucado* David jumped in and tried to convince John that it was important in prison to live with companions and that they currently had four in their cell. John replied, as long as he had God with him, he would not need any companions. “I am content to live alone.” He, of course, divulged nothing about his deal with Cisternas. Sergio looked on and said nothing.

Earlier in the day, Rubén had given John another table knife to replace the one that was stolen. Later that afternoon, *ranchero* Leonardo came to John’s cell again, bearing two apples and two watery Colun vanilla yoghurts to give him. John peeled the apples and poured the yoghurt over them. They went along nicely with his afternoon *quesadillas*. John was grateful to have found favor with many of the *machucados*, recalling Proverbs 16:7, “When a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” Besides the generally pleasant behavior, John and Miami got to talk about news stories circulating in Chile about prosecutors (district attorneys) being above the law and the need for both a grand jury and jury system, plus an internal police force to supervise and prosecute wayward Chilean judges and prosecutors. John also disclosed his Italian nationality to Ismael and Christian, given that that information was now published in the first volume of *Bearing the Cross*. With regard to that volume, John had yet to hear anything from ZigZag or Sudamericana publishers. The Spanish translation was sent off to be perfected by Martín Gallardo, a recent graduate of the Catholic University of Valparaíso. John and Bob did manage to finish the final edits of *Suffering Unjustly*, but Valentín was unable to finish up the index and other details due to the demands of his employment.

The next day, Cisternas was in charge and the *reos* in 118 had to cut short their *patio* time by 45 minutes. Cisternas wanted to leave early in order to watch a soccer match. Nevertheless, most daily routines went on unhindered, including increasingly rivalrous chess. Maybe John was subconsciously preoccupied by his Supreme Court hearing the next day, but he quickly conceded two chess games to Ismael—just five minutes into the matches—after making ridiculous errors that cost him his queen the first time and his rook, knight, and a pawn the second. He was feeling overrated as a chess player all of the sudden. What kind of “chessmaster” makes such silly errors? He normally would not commit such errors, but he had to admit that he lost about 5% of his games due to some such dumb mistake. Only 2% (at most) resulted from someone outsmarting him strategically. Maybe if he were facing better opponents he would stop being so careless? Moreover, he could hardly claim he was affected by sickness; his blood pressure had been about 125/85 lately. Maybe it was his older age? At any rate, he decided to quit playing for the day and instead just read his book and had some good philosophical talk with Miami.

One topic they discussed had to do with the relationship between a slave plantation and a Chilean prison. A slave-owner maximized efficiency and profits by placing slaves where they produced the most and had a comparative advantage. That meant not all slaves picked cotton. Some prepared merchandise for sale, bore or raised children, ran the master's household, etc., depending on each slave's talents. But Chilean prisons don no such efficiency, nor does anyone have an incentive to optimize production since the same revenue rolls in from taxpayers regardless of whether there is any production at all. Men with college degrees or advanced degrees clean toilets even though they could be given other work. The only thing that matters to the modern slave-owner equivalents is to keep the number of prisoners high or at an optimal level.

They noted, too, that being in jail lets a man know who his real friends are. All but one or two of Miami's had left him, perhaps in part due to the nature of his supposed crime (sexually molesting his granddaughter). John had lost a few acquaintances, but the vast majority of his friends had stuck with him and he had added dozens more new friends who were appalled by the injustice that he had been served. Having a friend, family member, or loved one in jail also brought exceptional learning opportunities for an affected person, providing a means for them to be "tested" and even bring out the best in them. This result was evident in the lives of John's people, especially his wife Pamela and his son David, but also in friends Jana, Maria, Joe, John, Jim, Bert, Bob, Valentín, Davinci, Gino, Alejandro, Leónidas, Jano, Ricardo, Patrick, Mark, Greg, Matt, Luís, Pablo, Sergio, Edwin, Obed, Daniel, Álvaro, Hermógenes, and at least a couple dozen others who faithfully gave of their time and resources. Perhaps somewhat ironically, an innocent man being in jail ended up bringing out the best in people, whereas a guilty man in jail brought about shame. With very few exceptions, none of John's friends was ashamed of him. Most of them thought of him as a political prisoner or suffering wrongfully at the hand of a bad justice system. John himself said that even in unjust circumstances, "the righteous are bold as a lion" (Proverbs 28:1b) and he intended to be courageous, regardless of what communists or the leftist media said about him or did to him and his loved ones.

Miami and John also talked about how obvious it was to identify an innocent man in jail, whom the *machucados* call *sanos* (meaning healthy, mentally). Instead of utilizing others a *sano* actually thought about others and how he might help them. Even if they had no money they could still offer a smile, kind word, or be of service in some way. Normal people enjoy helping others or being kind; criminals often do not, the latter tending to be more self-absorbed. *Sanos* are always like a fish-out-of-water in a hellish Chilean prison environment. This fact was evinced by their language or normal way of speaking, their courtesy and manners, their lack of interest in ripping others off, their sincere practice of their faith, their maintenance of something to hope for, such as holding out hope that one day they will be free and all restored, and their clear support from people outside who knew they had gotten a raw deal.

The *gendarmes* and other *reos* who knew Miami and John could see that they were *sanos*. Manuel was, too, even though he suffered from bipolar disorder and was not a *sano* in the strictest sense. Sergio and Mauricio claimed to be *sanos*, and in many ways John thought it to be true, but he always had a lingering doubt about them since the so-called "victims" of their sexual molestation never came forward to right the wrong done once reaching adulthood. Guillermo was a *sano* and acted like one. A man who disobeys a court's restraining order is simply not a criminal, and Guillermo should not have been put into the general population of those who were.

Elderly Delfín was probably innocent of repetitive sexual abuse charges, too, but John lacked the details of his actions to make a determination. Ismael likewise appeared to be innocent.“I would not be here if I had the money to hire a private attorney. I was still not arrested for two months after my girlfriend’s death because the coroner’s report listed‘suicide by gunshot wound to the head’ as the cause of death. Then the investigative police came in and had the coroner change the report to read ‘suicide with assistance’ and I was arrested and charged. But the same police were so ignorant that they determined that the exit wound was smaller than the entrance hole—which anyone who knows anything about ballistics will tell you is impossible. None of my defenders was able to point this fact out and convince the judges, who had lots of media pressure on them to convict me,” Ismael said. He continued,“All in all, I am glad it happened to me since by being in jail I came to know the Savior Jesus Christ; jail was my route to salvation.” John pointed out, however, that he was not presently walking with the Lord, to which Ismael could do no more than nod in response.

In other religious talk, John and Juan discussed the meaning of Revelation 21:8, where cowards top the list of those who will be cast into hell. They also disagreed about what being watchful, manly, and strong meant in 1 Corinthians 16:13. Juan thought they referred to spiritual attributes; John assured him that they did not. They even walked over to Ismael and Cristián, who were working out with weights, and John told them that what they were doing was biblical. Ismael seemed more swayed by Juan’s argument based on assumption rather than exegesis, even though Juan was far from faithful as a Christian and hardly a Bible scholar. Cristián had no comment. John figured his remark to the others would stick in their minds, who would one day reflect upon it and likely come to a different conclusion. They were presently spewing out the default pacifistic tendency evinced within the ranks of Chilean Pentecostals. (As an aside, at least Juan did a good, courageous deed by humiliating Rubén in a third chess game, even if he lost the first two times.) After all the talk that had transpired, John and Miami mused about how different 118’s *patio* life was without incessant conversationalists Karim and Raúl (the elder), who had been moved to *módulo* 107 four and nine months ago, respectively.

In other news, Cristián said he had not looked up his assigned Bible verses yet but would do so that evening. He also commented with admiration about John’s disciplined dedication to studying Italian every morning for twenty to thirty minutes. John was not so sure how good he was doing, especially since no other Italian study books had arrived and online testing placed him (humbly) as either level A2 or “intermediate,” which was hardly anything to write home about. While on the subject of Italy, which had just reported over 20,000 new Coronavirus cases and 548 deaths in a single day, John spoke to Cristián, Ismael, and Rubén about the relative virtues of Italian and European prisons. Even though Ismael’s second name was Fabrizio, he was pretty sure he had no Italian ancestor that would allow him to secure an Italian passport and serve the rest of his sentence in Italy.

Even if true Italian cuisine was little more than a pipe dream for Chilean prisoners, at least John was eating well. *Ranchero* Leonardo once again brought two apples by his cell that afternoon. John thought he might make him a *quesadilla* and save it in case he showed up again the next day. Speaking of food, Sergio (the convicted thief from 118B) continued to show his liking for John and the chips he provided, greeting him (as Miami occasionally did) by putting his right arm around John’s shoulder. John was happy to share such snacks with him. With respect to John’s night job (his books), Bob and John gave Martín the go-ahead on fixing the translation of

Bearing the Cross. There was still no word from the publishers, however, and Valentín still needed another day to get back to what lacked in finishing *Suffering Unjustly*. All that had transpired was enough for one day anyway. Like Jesus said: “Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:34b).

The next day turned out to have its own troubles as well. The cell doors were opened late as a new, never-before-seen young *gendarme*, who normally watched *módulo* 117 (the psychiatric ward), was in charge of 118. He was quite relaxed, permitting the *reos* to go about their routines to kill time without any hassle. John had recovered his chess playing abilities overnight, beating Rubén twice, Ismael once, Christián once, and drawing with Rubén once. Cristián, like all other artisans John knew, was not good with following through on his commitments, like the one he made to read his Bible verses, but he was quite humble about it. John had little more to talk with him about other than his circumstances as a prisoner. His relative was a *gendarme*, the first sergeant in charge of the prison’s canine unit, which is why he got assigned to 118 after leaving quarantine *módulo* 108. Other than more food sharing and more friendly gestures from Sergio (118B), to whom John gave a lemon (having been asked for one the day before), there was nothing remarkable about the day on the *patio*, besides being loudly greeted by an acquaintance he had made in 114, which had impressed Moroni, Daniel, and Cristián. John himself was surprised by the popularity he seemed to enjoy. When John got back to his cell, even after climbing the steps and putting away his things, his blood pressure was still quite low: 101/57. He again wondered if it was something to be worried about.

But it turned out that other things provided even greater worries for the day. John’s Supreme Court hearing—with his case having “preference”—was delayed once again. There were fifty-one cases on the docket that day, including many people appealing their parole decisions, and others requesting change of confinement to home arrest. Those cases took precedence over John’s preferential hearing. Apparently, according to Guillermo Améstica, there are two categories of preference: *ordinary* preference (like John had) for cases to annul previous verdicts, and *special* preference granted to those appealing parole decisions or trying to change their detention to home arrest. So John would have to wait yet another week and, with each passing week, the chances of his case being heard would increase. And what more could he do except to continue on with his life in 118 in the meantime? Of course, Miami, Rubén, Ismael, and John’s friends and family were disappointed to know what had happened, but that was the nature of the lethargic, overtaxed, often inept Chilean judicial system.

Guillermo in *módulo* 111 also shared some very serious news with John. His two cellmates that had backed him had departed to home arrest. They had protected him from the others in his cell, but now Guillermo was left vulnerable to the drug-dealing *choro* who subsequently took power. The drug dealer was requiring Guillermo to pay \$40,000 pesos (about 60 USD) per week to buy drugs from him, in order to maintain his safety. (He did not have to consume the drugs so long as he bought them.) John and Bob, who rightly was not thrilled with the idea of paying off some petty “drug lord” every week, asked him how much it would cost to bribe the guards in his *módulo* in order to let him return to 118. He was going to check, as well as to talk with the evangelical Christian John knew there (Cristián the evangelical barber) to see if he could help. Guillermo’s situation was dire since every day his life would be in jeopardy. Rubén was sad to hear it because by bringing him to 118, and then sending it back to 111, the *machucados* in 111 would think Guillermo was some sort of snitch. They would never trust him again and also cause

him a lot of grief. Something had to be done to bring him back to 118 again.

People outside supporting John were very much in favor of Guillermo coming back to 118 and living with John because he not only helped maintain John's cell along with doing the cooking, but he was also a compatible cellmate who liked to read and did not watch television, do drugs, or smoke. He provided a favorable situation for John, who was otherwise always facing the threat of having some undesirable *machucado* move into his cell. As with all things, John was hopeful for the future both in terms of his case and Guillermo's safety, and was committed to move forward and make the best use of time during his journey through terrestrial hell.

John had also spoken with Panchito in the prison infirmary, giving notice of Guillermo's hellish living situation. Panchito was sympathetic but frankly pointed out that every block in the Valparaíso prison could be characterized as terrestrial hell, and even more tragic for him was the fact that one of his colleagues—overweight paramedic David who had attended to John in *módulo* 109—was on a ventilator and dying from Coronavirus. He had likely contracted the disease after being exposed to infected prisoners. Miami counseled Guillermo to be patient because the council of *gendarme* officers had not yet met to formally select him as a chef for 2021, an act which would formally facilitate him coming back to 118 without having to bribe anyone. Consequently, like John, Guillermo had to practice patience, learning to bob-and-weave in the face of adversity.

Chapter IX The Bread of Adversity

The roots of adversity and affliction spread out in a prison, finding their way into the most obscure corners of the complex. Sometimes they run deep into the heart of the nefarious criminal justice system itself, reaching down to the worst judges and rabble prosecutors, sucking nutrients from the very essence of evil, incompetence, and corruption. Other times they spread out broadly from *módulo* to *módulo*, finding damp, fertile ground among a rogue segment of the 80% (according to Ismael) of inmates who are actually criminals—the other 20% being basically innocent—and those *gendarmes* that undertake exacting affliction on many hapless and beleaguered *machucados*. In 118, some men were undeservedly afflicted by the vile bane flowing through this system.

To John, Ismael, and Miami, that fact seemed so much worse than the adversity and affliction that reached those truly criminal elements in jail. John thought of this doleful reality as 34-year-old Sergio (from 118B) showed him his scars from stab wounds he received while in *módulo* 114 and the Colina prison near Santiago. He was a big, chubby guy who was imprisoned eleven years earlier, when his daughter was just six months old, for stealing fifteen million pesos in cash plus some guns from the house wherein he served as caretaker. But how could men like John, Miami, Guillermo, and Ismael (who also had some scars from prison knives and spears) be subject to—or threatened by—such treatment? Afflicting the innocent or partially innocent (improperly sentenced) is an unbearable load on the consciences of civilized people, yet that is precisely what one finds in Chilean prisons—and Valparaíso's penitentiary was one of the worst cases. Nonetheless, hardly anyone seemed to care beyond the core members of support groups for unjust sufferers, like John enjoyed. By contrast, almost no one cared about what was happening to Guillermo.

Some afflictions were more severe than others —like what Guillermo was facing at present. John talked to Miami, Rubén, and Ismael about the situation, and messaged Cristián in 111, too, and came to the conclusion that sending Guillermo money to pay off his cell's drug thug would not help him or John. Like Pamela said, "He knows that Guillermo lived with the *gringo* in 118 and once he figures out the funding source, the extortion will never end. He will keep milking the *gringo* or his friends for all he can." Furthermore, bribing the *gendarme* officers or 111's *paco* Contreras would be even worse. The *pacos* would swarm John to get all they could extract from him. Guillermo simply had to carry all of his belongings down to the *paco* in charge of 111, be it Contreras or otherwise, and tell him he could not return to his assigned cell for fear for his life. Then, in his new cell, he would have to await official appointment as chef and subsequent transfer to 118. That afternoon, Gulliermo wrote to John that he had, in fact, found a big *choro* who stuck up for him against the drug thug, keeping him safe for the time being. That service would not be free; he would owe money or favors. But he would be kept out of harm's way in the meantime. He wrote afterwards that two new, more reasonable *machucados* had been assigned to his cell. They would mitigate the circumstances: an answer to prayer.

Other afflictions were minor or trivial by comparison. For instance, the sun did not come out until long after the *reos* in 118 were locked in their cells. That fact not only meant that there was no vitamin D supplement available, it also meant that John's sheets that Miami had just washed would not dry. John would have to cover up over a bare mattress that night, or try to use the

oversized sheets he had for conjugal visits. “One has to be in prison to really appreciate what it is like to sleep on jail-cell, cloth-covered foam without sheets,” John thought. There were other little afflictions, too. Michael had a throbbing toothache and, in Chilean prisons at least, fat chance of getting any relief from a dentist. Indeed, the luckier *machucado* will get someone at the infirmary to pull his tooth out. The unlucky ones just suffer adversity. At least in 118, some other *reos* cared and wanted to alleviate suffering. John asked Pamela to sneak in some cloves (a home remedy for tooth pain) in the lining of the pizza box coming in *encomienda* the next day. His molar had had a hole in it for months and he would possibly soon need a clove himself.

Other emotional adversity occurred to, like the continual, cruel postponement of court hearings, witness John’s case coming before the Supreme Court. Plus, the frequent door banging and screaming of *machucados* in other *módulos* all around 118 was nerve-wracking. Then there was Castro, who was back in charge of 118. After roll call, he asked whose duty it was to clean the *patio*. No one said anything. Then Sergio said it was John’s job. “Why didn’t you speak up?” Castro barked at John, who replied, “My job is to clean the *patio* bathroom, and I collaborate with others to clean the *patio*.” That answer seemed to mystify the scrawny man.

A few hours later, Castro called the *reos* to a special lineup, holding a printed page of assigned afflictions that would be posted behind the glass notice box at 118’s *patio* entrance. The list included, finally, duties assigned to the (up to that point) loafers 118B. A couple of them got assigned the *patio*. That alleviated John’s burden a little bit, but Castro must have realized that fact and assigned him the duty of cleaning the barber room and toilet in addition to the bathroom-shower complex. If John had not already wiped the floor with Rubén in four straight chess games, he would have felt more afflicted by Castro’s edict. But, as it was, there was no dramatic difference between such new small afflictions and the added afflictions of most other days. They probably did not even come up to the level of the “light affliction” that the Apostle Paul described in 2 Corinthians 4:17.

At least John had better food than those imprisoned in the First Century. John had brought down (to share) a few peanut butter and raspberry jelly sandwiches and a pair of breakfast burritos stuffed with what was left of the chicken breast, *chanco* (mild white) cheese, and golden potatoes that Pamela had brought. The latter tasted much better than one would’ve expected. And, for their Friday lunch, Miami, Rubén, and John shared some of the pork, chicken breast, and golden potatoes from last Saturday’s *encomienda* that had been in 118’s freezer. John pulled the forkful of what he could not eat and offered it first to Ismael, who was not interested, and then to Sergio (from 118B) who most certainly was. Outside of prison, unwanted last bites would go into the trash can; inside, they garnered considerable demand from any *machucado* afflicted with *ranchito* or *dieta* on a daily basis.

Besides Castro, John ’s only real disappointment for the day was not making any progress all week with his (hopeful) new book publishers. Hopefully, Valentín would finish the final modifications to *Suffering Unjustly*’s index at least and it could be published on Amazon over the weekend. What’s more, John had to put things into perspective. He may have had no sheets but he did not have any more bedbugs or wastewater dripping on his head either. He did not have Covid-19 or pneumonia any longer, even if his tooth hurt a little bit. He did not have to live with the idiosyncrasies of Rufo, Mauricio, or Manuel either. Things could have been, and indeed had been, worse. At least he was not in 111 like Guillermo was. Moreover, *encomienda* was coming

the next day and he might even get to see Pamela in three weeks, so long as the government did not declare the area to be in phase 1 Coronavirus quarantine lockdown.

The next day, Castro spied trash and an apple core on the *patio* at lineup time. He rebuked the lazy *machucados* in 118B who were assigned to the task for not keeping the place cleaner. He did not know that they had been busy, Sergio (from 118B) in particular, making a delicious cake out of soggy cookies mixed with milk, with layers separated by jam and *manjar* (sweetened condensed milk) and topped with chocolate, before being stuck in the freezer for a day.

“Necessity is the mother of invention,” as Benjamin Franklin, Jonathan Swift in *Gulliver’s Travels*, and Sir Walter Raleigh Flour stated. Cakes are not often seen in prison and so everyone was happy to get a piece. (John was, too, although five hours later he had some intestinal inconveniences. He should have known better, even if the *machucados* had been throwing their used toilet paper in the toilet bowl the last two days. They probably still needed to learn how to use soap.) John brought down some golden potatoes and a few slices of a Papa John’s all-meat, stuffed-crust pizza and shared them with Miami, Rubén, Ismael, with a bite going to Juan. *Encomienda* day was always grand, and even though no salsas made it in this time, there was an extra avocado so John could make *guacamole* on Sunday night. Miami dropped by later and stuck a lemon and an onion through the square hole in the steel door to complete the ingredients. With Castro in charge, receiving *encomienda* was a little more challenging, since he did not seem to like *reos* putting away their goods in their cells—leaving hardly enough time for John to sort his food into plasticware and take it down to the freezer (with Sergio hurrying him along). Still, John’s blood pressure was low again when *patio* time was over: 95/70. After his nap and afternoon pizza, however, it stood at 134/67; go figure. He picked up the apparatus in Italy in 2017 and it seemed to be reliable. So what was up with John’s blood pressure?

Learning more about Chile’s criminal justice system was enough to raise anyone’s blood pressure. Miami’s public defender, Gonzalo Morales, got some information through the Transparency Act showing the payments made to an expert witness psychologist named Giovanna Carolina Arancibia Parra. The request for information made on February 21, 2019 (Folio number 8237) took nearly two years to arrive! The amount of money flowing through the criminal justice system is incredible, albeit it is hard to get anyone to divulge just how much the players are making. Arancibia was just one of hundreds of *peritos* (expert witnesses) in the Fifth Region (Valparaíso). She worked twenty-five cases in 2017 and fifteen in 2018, earning a total of 6,120,000 pesos (USD 8,850) and 3,110,000 pesos (USD 4,400), respectively. Since an psychological interview can be done, and a boilerplate case report can be efficiently written, in under eight hours, and court appearances on average require less than two hours, one may estimate that Arancibia worked approximately 176 hours for the Valparaíso prosecutor (*fiscalía*) in 2017 and 82 hours for them in 2018. In other words, she worked, on average, 3.4 hours per week in 2017 and 1.7 in 2018. That part-time job worked out to her earning 37,900 pesos (USD 55) and 34,800 pesos (USD 50) per hour, respectively, making her more money in one hour than 80% of Chileans earn working a nine-hour day. Her pay for a case report ranged from 240,000 pesos to 380,000 pesos (USD 347 to USD 520), and she was paid 50,000 pesos to 120,000 pesos (USD 72 to USD 173) to testify in court about her report. While these pay rates may seem unimpressive in places like the United States, Western Europe, or Japan, they represent a *lot* of money in Chile. Yet, she is a rather small player. Some *peritos* are part of larger groups of specialists working as a company and sharing office expenses and staff, and doing hundreds of cases per year. They milk the system for many times what Arancibia earns.

Herein lies the main answer as to why an inept, evilmibbing, inefficient, wayward (if not corrupt) judicial system can continue unchecked: the extraordinary sums of money being made by *peritos*, lawyers, public defenders, prosecutors, and judges. Readily available documents from Chile's Library of Congress (*BCN*) website confirm that the latter players are generally earning salaries from three to over nine million pesos per month, placing them in the top three percent of wage earners in Chile. Compounding this fact, the *gendarmes* make somewhere between 500,000 and four million pesos per month (with officers obviously making the most), without counting the significant aforementioned cash received from "corrupt" activities and kiosk sales. There are also a host of food and goods suppliers contracted, plus dozens of social workers, psychologists, and medical professionals on staff at the prison—many of whom make more than the *pacos*. Why would any of these people want to radically change the system (1) by making it more efficient, (2) by adding a new police force to oversee judges and prosecutors and make sure they do not deviate from the paths of justice or succumb to social pressure, or (3) by adding twelve jurors to decide whether there is sufficient evidence to accuse a man or find him guilty—like criminal trials in English-speaking countries? None of those professional players want fewer accused and/or convicted people being run through the system and landing in jail. Their livelihood depends on a constantly increasing flow of guilty people and innocent people found guilty alike—let the truth be damned. The last thing any of these "rent seekers" (to use economics jargon) really want to do is expose the maladies of Chilean criminal justice. They have expensive car payments to make, private school and college tuition to pay, and luxurious lifestyles to support. The vast majority are not about to give any of that up in order to uphold some virtuous, quixotic, or abstract principle based on what might be in the public interest. The times they pay attention to the public are when the outraged (leftist) media or their political parties are demanding to find someone guilty—even if he is not—causing them to cower under social pressure, as noted toward the end of chapters I and XIX the first volume of *Bearing the Cross*.

Taxpayers, prisoners, and defendants (accused) foot most of the bill, but most of them have no idea just how lucrative the system is and how unjust it has become. Some know that each prisoner costs the taxpayer around 780,000 pesos per month (around USD 1,125 in 2021)—more than the average person earns in Chile's Fifth Region. Few outside of prison ever complain. Instead, they naively *presume* that the system is working, more or less, to serve the *public* interest when, in fact, it serves *private* interests far more. Innocent people going free is not good for business; plea bargains and receiving bonuses for closing cases are. Training inmates for reinsertion into society to prevent them from falling back into a life of crime is also not good for business; a revolving door is. Whom among all the aforementioned players can one reasonably expect to fall on his sword or even cut their lifestyle in order to serve "the good of society" and let innocent people go free? John and Miami knew the answer, and they suspected others did, too: "Few and far between."

Some things in jail are simply unforgettable, like the terrible sensation that runs through one's mind the first afternoon they close his cell door behind him and lock him in for many hours—especially if he is confined with a man (or men) that he only just recently met. One eventually gets used to it, though, just like John's brain had been adapting to so many spots before his eyes—which were far fewer now, having been displaced by a soupy brownish gruel and those amoeba-like floating things he mentioned previously. He hoped his vision problems were getting better, and in some sense they were. Or maybe John was just getting used to the reduced eyesight

in the same way he had gotten used to being locked in a large-bathroom-sized cell for eighteen hours each day? Yet, even with the relatively mellow *patio* time under friendly guards Penailillo one day and Cisternas the next, there was always something memorable or surprising that would take place; something that one never could get used to.

There were so many *machucados* taking cold showers that John had to squeegee the water out two, if not three, times a day. Walking past the *pesebre* adjacent to the showers and toilets, he noticed it was half full of water. That fact was unusual but he just made note of it and carried on, his thoughts soon being replaced with disgust upon seeing the used toilet paper once again strewn along the sides of each toilet. Shortly thereafter, he had to do a third cleaning since the warm summer day seemed to have driven more *machucados* to bathe. And there he was: Louis (27), who had recently arrived from *módulo* 102, had climbed into the *pesebre* and was taking a bath! For the last fourteen months, John had never seen anything but men washing *ranchos*, dishes, or clothing—with perhaps two or three brushing their teeth on occasion—in the *pesebre*. None of that could now be done while this weird, bald young man was frolicking in the water. The rat hunt, the bedbugs, the armed conflict, the beating on the metal cell doors, the sudden loss of power by overloading one of 118's floor's circuit breakers—when some new *machucado* or imbecile decided not to advise others he was using high-amperage devices (as had happened that same morning while John was heating his “shower” water), *Che* threatening John while he washed clothes in the same *pesebre*, or seeing Miami's partially toothed smile while washing at the same *pesebre* and talking political economy with John (noting that he had all his teeth when he entered prison several years ago but they had been being pulled out by prison “dentists”), were all memorable *patio* experiences. Now crazy Louis would be added to that unforgettable list. He told John that he was only in 118 temporarily while he waited for a room to open up in *módulo* 117 next door. The psychiatric ward was always full at the Valparaíso penitentiary; no surprise there.

Speaking of surprises, Pamela could never get used to waiting in the long *encomienda*-submission line, especially on warm days. She could not understand why the prison would have such a nasty toilet for women (she assumed the men's was no better) waiting to bring things to their prisoners, although she had some idea after looking around at all the *flaite* women in line with her. They probably threw their toilet paper on the side of the bowl after using it, too. She could not grasp why the *pacos* let the pigeon poop cake up on the walkway, thick as paint in some places, or why they did not clean up the bags of excrement thrown from the cells above onto the long dirt “garden area” that they walked past, or why they tolerated so many mangy dogs scratching fleas off their fur next to people bringing bags of food, among other items. “But what else should she expect terrestrial hell's entrance way to look like?,” John mused. The interior of the prison—and its toilets for sure—was hardly any cleaner or less disgusting and inhumane. Alimentary hygiene was hardly a starred feature of the Valparaíso penitentiary. Granted, inside and out, the complex was a far cry from Reñaca, but Reñaca was not in terrestrial hell.

For John and the others being tormented, life went on, and John sought little ways to help others or add some joy to their lives—like plopping a big spoonful of cell-made *guacamole* on the turkey-cheese-lettuce-mayonnaise-BBQ sauce sandwiches he shared at lunchtime. Ditto for the ham-cheese-beef *quesadillas* he shared at breakfast. They made all the recipients happy for a moment, maybe even forgetting their hellish environment. Playing chess while eating likewise seemed to enhance that illusory effect. That is probably why there are so many outdoor chess

players in Eastern European cities, John thought, where people often made their little escapes from the communist hell they were forced to endure for the bulk of the Twentieth Century. John (1,427-127-30) had a lot of hell to forget, too. Miami had the same idea about spreading a little joy in terrestrial hell from the 118A contingent (like Alejandro) pitched in and helped., fixing the broken back of elderly Delfín's wheelchair that day, and daily washing the clothes of the disabled *machucados* in 118A.

Nevertheless, joy was not the only thing being doled out. John reminded Cristián, who had still not read his Bible verses, since he "did not like to read," of the danger he faced of landing in eternal hell. John also lectured Michael on the fiery return of Christ and even hotter hell that his pals Luís Ahumada, Sebastián Valdés, and the other three coached witnesses—who had lied in court during John's trial—would face, citing 2 Thessalonians.1:5-9. He and his pals might be really amused by what they got away with, but neither God nor John or his family and friends were. Remarkably, it was more than a little ironic that John would be in a terrestrial hell preaching to others about eternal hell.

Chapter X Cast Your Bread upon the Waters

In spite of it all, John's popularity was flourishing, from the daily greetings by his fans, aloft in 114, to the little-too-much, touchy-feely Sergio (from 118B), who could not stop calling him George. Even when Michael and Rubén tried to explain to him the difference between George and John, like Jorge and Juan, the plump thief just could not get it. The sounds of the two names must have been indistinguishable to his *flaite* brain sensors. So John just started calling him Roberto instead, which puzzled Sergio, a "mangy dog" in his own way, although he was tamed by John through feeding him some BBQ potato chips on a daily basis. Doing so wrought other benefits. Seeing John's stiffness and wrenching shoulder pain while stretching each morning before formation, Sergio seemed to enjoy wrapping his arms around John's chest from behind and lifting him off the ground in order to adjust his back. He was shorter than John but still had adequate strength, suitable for the task. John wondered what else he could train him to do.

Cristián was certainly convinced that John had leadership talents that went far beyond instructing useful *machucados*. He implored John not to "escape" to Italy once he was free. He was just the "cultured leader" of a new and growing movement that Chile needed in order to remove bad politicians who were ruining the country. John had to chuckle at the thought of him being a "great leader," sitting in jail while being prodded along by an artistic alleged sex offender, disguised as an armed robber, who could not even muster the energy or interest to read six Bible verses. Pamela was more optimistic, citing Luke 19:40, that "the stones would immediately cry out." Cristián was one such stone. For her, he was a harbinger of things to come for her and John's life, and his comment was just as memorable as the image of Louis bathing in the manger-like wash basin. She was pretty sure that John's time would come, and that the Lord would use him greatly. So were many other Baptists and Libertarians, like Valentín, who had finally finished getting *Suffering Unjustly* ready to publish.

As it turns out, Random House (Penguin Books) had closed down all its South America offices, and so its *Editorial Sudamericana* brand was no longer printing books. John would have to look elsewhere since Covid-19 seemed to be wreaking havoc everywhere. Álvaro was trying another outlet, Editoriales El Líbero, recommended by *Instituto de Libertad y Desarrollo* (Liberty and Development Institute) in Santiago. By the end of March, Álvaro will have declared that attempt a failure, too. Nevertheless, the more people read the first volume of *Bearing the Cross* the more hooked they became, but finding a publisher willing to carry such a candid work written by a hot-potato author was proving difficult.

The prison was likewise brimming with the same Coronavirus illness, or so the *gendarmes* said, that was plaguing the world outside. Nonetheless, Cisternas did not seem to mind that hardly anyone in 118 took precautions against it. Indeed, prison life had become eerily calm, with the only things exciting happening in 118 being, on the one hand, shirtless Louis jumping around and twirling a pair of broom handles in some sort of martial arts exercise. On the other hand, motor-mouth Michael was back in the dining room entertaining native speakers with his dialectical ranting. John could not get more than one-half of what he said in his *flaite* dialect. Rubén remarked the dialect was actually called *chorizo*, stemming from the prison *choros*. Either way, it was spoken fast and was largely intelligible to John, who mainly heard the same foul language repeated: *conch\$#&@+dre*—at least once every ten seconds. Michael was all talk and

little or no listening, sort of like a rooster. He had nothing intelligent to say and made up for it by uttering gibberish at 250 m.p.h. He did pipe down, however, once John fed him well.

With his hearing just two days away, John did his best to focus on perfecting and promoting his new books. However, before returning to be cell, he did take a few minutes to further examine the *pesebre*. John looked it over and decided that it was about the same size as an extradeep tub, although the flat part at the bottom was only as wide as his elbow to the end of his fist. Yet, it was plain to see how Louis could have mistaken it for a bathtub. “Horses and pigs would probably do the same thing with their mangers if they took baths and had fingers and thumbs like Louis did,” he surmised. Besides, Louis was no barn animal or exhibitionist; “he simply lacked,” as they say in Chile, “a few planks to complete the bridge.”

The next morning, Castro caught John singing the end of “Abide with Me” as he peered through the square hole prior to unlocking the cell door. As John was leaving, saddled with his backpack and plastic chair with wet towel draped over it, Castro’s smiling face greeted him, “Hello, John.” John said nothing but “Good morning,” and walked on his way. Once downstairs, he hung his towel and reusable plastic tortilla zippable bags to dry. Before that, Miami said, “You have to wash those out with dish soap instead of just rinsing them,” taking one bag and washing it out with laundry suds. John liked the bag to be dry prior to putting the *quesadillas* inside—those that he would share with others at breakfast. Like Miami, he had a different attitude than other prisoners. “And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise” (Luke 6:31), was not a commonly practiced principle in the Valparaíso penitentiary.

Lots of other men were partaking of John’s food now—even without asking. Sergio (from 118B) was even getting bold, peering into John’s wallet as he passed cash to the other Sergio through the drop-down pane between the dining hall and the sycophants’ room inside 118, done in order to buy some liquids at the kiosk. He saw lots of blue bills (10,000 pesos or about USD 15), then asked him for 5,000 pesos so he could buy cigarettes. John flatly refused: “I do not give *reos* money for drugs or cigarettes.” But, somewhat paradoxically, he did give him a few of the Pall Malls that Pamela brought him in order to keep him happy. Sergio, akin to a few of the *machucados* in 109, was getting more in the habit of hovering over John in hope of getting some delicious food, which he called *caviar*.

Then Louis came up and asked John to share some of his drinks he just bought from the kiosk run. At first John said “No,” but (after seeing his countenance fall) he then asked him if he wanted the rest of his apple-flavored water mixed with ginger ale. He accepted. Earlier that day Cristián asked to borrow one of John’s plastic knives, which John always conceded—despite Cristián’s admission that he had his own in his cell but always forgot to bring it down. “This guy is one of the most disorganized artisans I have ever met,” John thought, although Cristián was always polite and grateful for whatever utensil or food John gave him. Rubén asked to use some of John’s dish soap to clean out the box freezer, too. John’s backpack had become, it seemed, a sort of mobile pantry or general store. However, John had to admit that the dish soap was the least he could contribute to cleaning the freezer, from which Rubén tossed out (with Castro’s permission) all sorts of old food and chunks of raw meat that had been there for many months. John stored his daily meat and starch rations in it and without it his life would be even more miserable. “Besides,” he mused, “it is pretty weird that terrestrial hell has a working freezer in the first place.”

The *machucados* seemed to be fascinated by John walking back and forth each morning, just as they were amused by him rolling up his pant legs and reading such a thick book (760 pages) out in the sun—neither of which was easy to do in the larger, violent, general-population *módulos*. While walking, he would hear them taunt him from beneath the open, stable-like *bodega*, “Hey, Donald Trump,” or Sergio (118B) calling out, “George, how many books have you written?,” or Michael suggesting that he give one of his books to his pal Luís Ahumada. John would humor them, saying, “Eleven working on twelve and, as a Libertarian, I have no use for Trump.” Of course, the *machucados* had no idea about the differences between Republicans, Democrats, and Libertarians, nor did they know the first thing about political philosophy. They were just trying to make some well-meaning connection with John as if they were making contact with the crew of a recently landed UFO in a Nebraska cornfield.

In that sense, John concluded, “Maybe they really weren’t much different than barn animals after all. Horses, cows, chickens, and pigs wouldn’t throw their toilet paper in the bowl either.” In terms of his books, he told them that Marcelo, Rubén, and Miami all had copies of some of them, in case they wanted to review them. To that suggestion, John received more dull barn-animal stares, further confirming his suspicion. “Insofar as Ahumada Is concerned, that liar is so stupid he probably does not know how to read!,” John quipped, resulting in a chorus of hee-hawing and laughter from the stable full of his admirers. As *patio* time entered its final hour, John completed his daily chore of walking to the *pesebre* and washing the three plasticware items that held the sandwiches he made each night, potato chips and nacho-cheese Doritos, and Toddy chocolate chip cookies, setting them upside down on the part of the metal bench that was least-caked with pigeon and seagull poop. By then, the *machucados* were mostly in their stalls and, hence, there were fewer empty stares or comments. They had also been quieted and unhappy after hearing about their buddy David having his *dominical* benefit denied, due to not showing up at the hospital in May 2020 as ordered, or some such horsing-around related to the medical facility. He would be sent back to the general population the following day. His attorney was challenging the decision to remove a benefit due to a *gendarme* mishap.

In some of the saddest news of the day, David the paramedic had gone beyond all help. He died from complications related to Covid-19 at 3 p.m. on January 13th, becoming one of the few casualties (if not only casualty) of the virus in the Valparaíso penitentiary. As noted earlier, he was quite overweight and had some other chronic diseases. Still, his passing put the fear of God into many men, except men like Ismael. During a breakfast conversation pertaining to benefits like *dominical* (Sunday leave), John asked him if he would go to church if he could, especially given that he would be alone since his family lived in Santiago. “It’s not going to be among the things I’ll do my first Sunday,” he explained, “I will be looking after my carnal needs first. I have been in jail many years.” Rubén concurred that a man had to take care of “his necessities.” John was sad to hear it, even though he already knew that Ismael was no longer walking with the Lord—despite the fact that he was once again reading his Bible in public. Rubén’s sentiment was hardly surprising either. It was just sad to see men who had formerly closed with Evangelical faith, now overtly planning to sin or condoning the decision to do so. Neither man showed any shame, or any fear of God or hell, thus making light of the biblical warning found in Hebrews 10:31, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” While Ismael was earnestly hoping to qualify for *dominical* benefits later in the year, his eagerness to sin indicated that he had already qualified to go to hell. It is one thing to fall into sin; it is quite another to dwell on future plans to partake of it. John remembered the words of Christ in Luke 12:34, “where your

treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Ismael’s was far from God.

Out on the *patio*, John got up from reading *El Juicio Crítico Como Progreso*. As he walked, he was gazing over at the external sewage pipes running down the walls of *módulos* 114 and 115, just as they did on 116, 117, and probably all others. Suddenly, someone from 114 yelled out a greeting, asking John how his morning had gone. “Not well; I am in prison,” was his reply. Chess, reading, and writing were fine, but being imprisoned for something he did not do was not, neither was the lack of medical care, chronic shoulder pain, diminished vision, and other dangers he faced, not to mention lack of visitors, lack of friends, lack of marital relations, or lack of income. How could anyone be “well” or “fine” under such disadvantages, filth, and otherwise hellish conditions? “Maybe the *machucados* live in denial,” he thought, “or maybe they are just not smart enough to figure it out—sort of like sheep going to the slaughter.” John finally finished reading the book. It seemed to have taken him forever.

The worst part of the day came with news that arrived after Castro—who had once again been friendly with John that morning—sent the *reos* to their cells: John’s Supreme Court hearing had been postponed once again due to the arrival of twenty-eight more urgent cases at the last minute. The new court date was set for January 21st. Lawyer Guillermo Améstica said it was not entirely bad news since the Court’s President, Carlos Kunsemuller, who was likely to favor John, was not present anyway. So more delay was actually a blessing in disguise. John’s friend Hermógenes Pérez de Arce was shocked to hear that sentiment, saying that he could not imagine anyone being worse than Kunsemuller. Expertise mattered little; everything was political. Guillermo had a different idea. Kunsemuller had heard many attempted murder cases before and his legal-technical expertise would allow the court to see that John did not show any intention to murder anyone. There was little John could do other than hope that the judges would read volume one of the soon-to-be-published Spanish translation of *Bearing the Cross (Llevando la Cruz)*—assuming he could get a copy into each one’s hands. So he strategized with others and practiced patience, cozying up to his peanut butter and raspberry jelly sandwich, and enjoying the two Chilean cherries that Miami had slipped him through the cell door portal—the only two John had eaten for at least fourteen months.

There must have been a personnel shortage among the *gendarmes* since they sent over a couple of new faces to take charge of 118 the next day, whose usual duties probably entailed prisoner transport or some desk-jockey function. It was vacation time, too, although with the quarantine few seemed to be going anywhere. Of course, there was no vacation for any of the residents of terrestrial hell. No day was different than any other in terms of one’s routine. At least John got to finish a lot more books than usual. He started to reread *Los Chilenos en Su Tinto* (Chileans defined by their shade/wine) by Hermógenes Pérez de Arce, who had written a friendly, personal, signed note to John on the first page. On page 28, John found a statement about the common Chilean’s knowledge about the country’s aristocratic elite to be particularly relevant to the *machucados*: “The great majority of the population knows little about them except that they exist.” This fact was clearly seen among those in 118A/B, 118’s *rancheros*, and Aníbal, and probably nearly anyone else that John ran across from the general population. They knew little about him either, although they tended to like him after meeting him and especially after getting to know him.

John was no aristocrat, at least not in terms of money. He was far poorer than any of the Chilean elite, but his education, culture, travel, multilingualism, language level, intellect, writings, and

experience was at least as high if not higher than theirs. He got along with that class well and many (if not most) of his best, long-term Chilean friends were from it, with the notable exception of the historic Baptists and pro-life Libertarians he enjoyed spending time with—Valentín in particular. But insofar as the *machucados* were concerned, John had landed from a different planet. They probably sensed that he was not a full-fledged aristocrat since none of that group would ever darken the doorstep of a Chilean prison; they pay high-priced lawyers or pay off judges and prosecutors to ensure their freedom—or at least make sure that their punishment amounts to nothing more than taking a short ethics course. But it was likewise clear to the *machucados* (and *gendarmes*) that John did not fit in with people in prison any more than the military officers under the former military government did, who were incarcerated after being unjustly convicted. Like them, John was far too sophisticated.

That fact was underscored as Louis, just transferred to 117, yelled and spewed out the most vile cuss words and criticisms he could, pitching them over the tall fence to anyone who happened to be on the *patio* of 118. Of course, *gringo* John had no idea who was yelling or what he was saying any more than he understood other *reos* who speak *flaite*, *coa*, or *chorizo*, until Miami brought the tirade to his attention and interpreted the gist of it. John's inability to understand those dialects was actually a blessing in disguise, since he was thus immune to so many insults or jokes leveled against him and probably did not even know the half of just how dangerous were the circumstances simmering around him.

But even if those *machucados* could not grasp what John said without an interpreter, they did understand his generosity with food (*caviar*), which they described as being *manjar* (delectable). Not very different from barn animals, although not quite as bad as goats scrouting through the garbage, or dogs eating scraps, they were always hungry and, like just about everyone else 118, pounced at any opportunity to eat good food *de la calle* (brought in). John was always quick to praise Pamela for dutifully bringing the ingredients. Sandwiches were easy to make so long as John had good “fixins” (as they say in the South). When there was extra, such as during their customary Friday “luncheon,” Sergio (from 118B) got a huge plate of roast beef and chicken breast accompanied by rice, plus BBQ potato chips, nacho cheese Doritos, and a ham and cheese sandwich John had prepared the night before. Earlier, at breakfast, John shared cell-made *ave-mayo* (shredded chicken breast mixed with mayonnaise) sandwiches for breakfast with him, Cristián, Ismael, and Rubén. He was a happy camper and recipient of uncanny largess that day, even if he could otherwise hardly communicate with John. Like a faithful dog, he was becoming attached by the gestures of goodwill that satisfied his visceral cravings.

He also carried a plateful of leftovers to the others in his cell (including Michael)—product of most food seeming repulsive to John (as it had over the last week) and he was not eating much. The same symptom occurred when he had Covid-19 in Winter 2020, but this time he had no fever or cough and his blood pressure was normal. Moreover, a nap was good enough to “cure” him when he wasn’t feeling well, although it did not improve his appetite. Sergio (118B) hugged John from behind and kissed his scalp, even giving him an unwanted shoulder massage and a slightly painful shoulder/arm stretch. He asked John his age (nearly 58) and commented that he was the same age as his daddy. Like with Rufo, John seemed to have endeared himself to another fighting *machucado* who would likely protect him as well as any Doberman should the need arise. He figured that relationship might come in handy, and it was not too costly if all he had to do was to provide scrumptious food and a few cigarettes now and then. In prisons or gulags one

cannot buy too many friends. And most of John's well-wishers seemed content to be amicable just because he was "famous" or a stand-up guy. Being a *gringo*, an author, a reader, the best chess player (a game that mystified them), one who sets and accomplishes goals that all could observe, and a Baptist pastor probably added to the attraction.

When José arrived with the second barrel of grub, he cried out "*Rancho! Esos que comen rancho, los de la población penal!*" and, shortly thereafter, "*Rancho! Esos que sacan rancho, los de la población penal!*" (both statements loosely translated as "prisoners come get your chow"). The phrases were intentionally derogatory and disrespectful, conveying the idea that the poor inmates were to come get their low-quality (*penca*) food. José himself knew the quality was bad and that is why he made such a scene when he arrived. The meat (*tumba*) in *rancho* was not high quality (*wayu*) and often consisted of some sort of despicable wieners (called *el chuto*, a Peruvian term for penis). If whole potatoes (*coraila*) were found suspended in the gruel, the *machucados* would harvest them, wash them, and dice them up for use in cell-made potato salad with mayonnaise. The same was true with beans (*porotos* or *musicales*). The *rancheros* knew well that the general population got the worst *rancho*, and thus spoke of it with such derision. Other *ranchos* were prepared for the officers, duty-level *gendarmes*, crazy *reos* in 117, female *reos*, and juvenile *reos* in 116—all of which were better than the *rancho* served in 118 and other *módulos*.

Accordingly, few men partook of *rancho*. The daily food waste in prison was nothing less than extraordinary. Applying his economics training, John thought it would be better to just give the *reos* food vouchers and let them use them to have their grub catered or delivered from outside the prison complex. Another alternative would be to allow their wives, mothers, sisters, or anyone else to use such vouchers to buy groceries and prepare food that the men like. Yet such thinking never enters into the always inefficient, certainly uncreative, and excessively wasteful socialist mindset. The communism of the Valparaíso penitentiary had once again failed to satisfy the needs of consumers, whose occupants in 118 opted for John's equally free "grub" that was of vastly greater quality (*exquisito*) than *rancho*. Indeed, no one ever called *rancho*, a term used in the Chilean armed forces for "chow," or *dieta*, "manjar" except in jest.

Chapter XI Remember My Chains

John started the second half of January 2021 the same way he had the last two months: doing eighty-five push-ups against the upper frame of his bunk. In mid-November he started doing twenty-five and had been adding one more every day ever since. (Due to his hand surgery in 2016 that fused the bones in his right hand, he permanently lost the required flexibility in his right wrist to do push-ups on the floor.) He followed these up with ninety hands-on-hips twists, and some stretching, in his cell. His body had many more pains and limitations now than when he entered prison over fourteen months earlier—marking an almost forgotten time when he religiously went to the pool four times per week and swam a total of seven kilometers. But the exercise routine in his cell was just another manifestation of the repetitive monotony that characterized prison life, a feeling which probably emanates out of *Bearing the Cross* into a reader’s mind. Monotony and boredom were real enemies, and they touched the food and recreational activities that dominated the lives of the *reos*. One had to maintain hope to keep sane mentally, finding and undertaking presently purposeful activities. Those who did not work as *rancheros* often made things with wood. Others, like Miami, worked laundry and cleaning duties. The worst off were those who did nothing, but even they were much better off having cell phones to communicate with the outside world, read, listen to podcasts or YouTube, listen to music, and watch movies on Netflix and Amazon Prime. John liked to do a little of all of that, but his main activity was reading physical books and writing and publishing three of his own. He also taught on the Historic Baptists Zoomcast twice a week. His life was caught up in that work, which defined who he was while in prison in many ways. For healthy *reos*, undertaking some activity was essential.

Everything in prison tended to wear away. John’s clothes had grown quite shabby and he was still waiting for someone to send him a pair of size 12½ or 13 sneakers or slip-ons. One-half of the chairs he brought in for visitors were now broken. His electric razor was showing signs of wear and already had to be repaired once by Carlos. His electric oven lost a heating element. At least one of his quilts had holes in it from rubbing against sharp points on the bunk frame. Many of his possessions had been stolen and not all replaced. The *gendarmes* were also cracking down more in the *encomienda* line, prohibiting Pamela to put sauces, salsas, dressings, and pepper inside John’s sacks—making prepared food more bland or insipid. Moreover, prison food was anti-hygienic. For example, cheese and lunch meat were touched by three pairs of hands before landing in the *reo*’s: the man running the *bodega*’s, the *ranchero*’s, and Miami’s. With so many people fondling the food it is a wonder that many more men were not sick.

At least with Cisternas in charge receiving *encomienda*, and sorting stuff from it to go into the freezer, was not a hassle—even though John was made a little uncomfortable by the jeers and whistling of the *machucados* under the *patio*’s *bodega* as he passed before them. They all wanted what John had and their barn-animal noises were used to communicate that desire. Nonetheless, they were not selfish. There had been a terrible fire in the area (Quilpué) the day before and many people were homeless or without food. Cisternas called a special lineup and asked if the *reos* would once again be willing to donate their breakfasts (*colaciones*) to the needy. The vote from both 118 and 118A/B was unanimously in favor of doing so. Part of the reason for this action, even if subconsciously, was to create the illusion that prisoners were better off than free poor people. Once again, the attitude smacked of communism, which always brought a

permanent level of poverty to most of a country's inhabitants that was a little bit higher than the poverty level elsewhere in the world. True prosperity or higher living standards could only be achieved with a market economy bounded by liberty-enhancing institutions. Like communism, prisons only misallocated resources and job assignments, leaving dilapidated living conditions and significant poverty and misery.

Nevertheless, maintaining an illusion to the contrary was essential for communist (or judicial system/prison) leaders to sustain their power and lucre. By giving of their resources, communist underlings, like prisoners, could feel good about themselves and reinforce their belief that they were much better off than others. Yet they had to ignore their relative massive poverty compared to western countries or free people. While it was true that prisoners had more than most poor or unfortunate people in Chile, viewing their miserable circumstances merely blinded them to the reality that they were neither growing in knowledge and abilities nor improving their professions. Their resumes would have a gaping hole in it when they finally got out and their job skills would have become more antiquated and deficient by then—compounded by the degradation of their requisite diligence and punctuality traits necessary to maintain employment in the outside world.

John had little mental degradation while suffering his unjust incarceration, thanks to his regular reading and book writing activities. Indeed, it was hard to believe that (with the help of many friends outside prison) he was already writing his third book. His body, however, was suffering degradation—mainly his encumbered eyesight and painful shoulder. The latter was evident the following morning (and every morning) when he bathed within his cell's small shower stall (60 centimeters or 30 inches squared). He could almost reach the small of his back with his fingertips on his right hand. But his left shoulder smarted so much that he could not get anywhere close without pushing his left elbow against the wall and forcing his arm to get a soapy fingernail or two to reach that spot. His twice-operated left knee had swollen more than usual, too, but it rarely bothered him when sitting in his chair to read or play chess, or when lying in his bunk writing a book.

John 's bodily woes did not impede his chess playing at least, nor did they stop Sergio (from 118B) from boldly hugging him from behind and kissing him on the forehead as he concentrated on his game. Of course, John could have done without the exaggerated affection, which (as alluded to earlier) always terminated once he fed the young man some of his imported chips, that is, *caviar*. Sometimes John was a bit sterner with Sergio. That morning (January 19th), just as nowadays-always-nice Castro had called the *reos* into formation, for instance, Sergio tried to pick John up from behind and adjust his back—an action that was repulsed.“Oh, you want to wait until after numbering off,” remarked Sergio, as Castro sternly looked over both men. John did not want to draw attention to himself, especially with Castro in charge. The *paco* informed the *reos* that they would not be able to have crepes (*panqueques*) since the *gendarme* inspectors refused to let him bring flour into the prison complex. After Castro's explanation, Sergio forgot about John's back and hurried upstairs into 118B, only to later be driven back to the dining hall by hunger. He greeted everyone and showed his aforementioned special affection for John. Like always, once the conversation turned to one of John's academic subject areas—public policy, economics, or Christian theology—or once Miami started telling stories about aviation, piloting, or Chilean military history, Sergio and Michael disappeared. The former preferring to sit on his bed and talk on his cellphone.

However, Michael would usually return to the dining hall to observe the chess players and blab about some nonsense or give his erudite soccer opinions. For instance, John asked him if he was able to read as he struggled to comprehend the cover of *Los Chilenos en Su Tinto*. He told everyone that he could, but that he never had a passing grade on any mathematics examination and only got high marks in physical education. He seemed sort of proud of his academic failure. He also spouted off about how poor he was growing up, rarely having more to eat than white bread and margarine for breakfast, before rushing off to school. He said that Luis Ahumada grew up in, and still lived in, his same, poor neighborhood, where no one's home had concrete walls—a bullet could easily pass through their walls. He then went on to say that he did not want any money from John, just a pistol, and how he would never shoot in the air; he would aim at a person directly. It sounded to John like Michael was making some kind of an offer, but he made no reply.

Ahumada and his friends had lied in court and John was in jail on account of their perjured testimony and the biased, incompetent judges who accepted it—even though they knew it to be mendacious. They deserved to die but the Bible made it clear to John that Christians were to wait for God to avenge them against both the Luchito Ahumadas and evil judges of this world (see Romans 12:19 and 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8)—as noted in Chapter V of the first volume of this book. Ahumada's attorneys, Carlos Oliva and Rita Díaz (and probably District Attorney Paola Rojas), had certainly coached the witnesses and arranged their perjury. Hell was likely in the future of those communists, too. John had remarked that this group of miscreants must have been really stupid—not knowing John's religious convictions but certainly knowing his level of intelligence and preparation with guns. Just what would his reaction be after having his latter years stolen from him and being released from prison as a poor man around age 70? They did not seem to weigh the potential consequences to each one personally on account of their nefarious plan. They certainly did not consider what God was going to do with them: to “repay with affliction” those who troubled Christians like John—in flaming fire taking vengeance” against them. Earlier, Oliva had told John's lawyer Fabiola García that he was “redder than any Chilean communist,” but that if John paid Ahumada fifty million pesos (USD 68,000) they would make the attempted murder charge go away. Even if John had the money to pay, neither he nor his attorney believed that such a deal could be guaranteed. It was not as effective and guaranteed as bribing the judges directly, as other attorneys implicitly offered to do.

One could always tell who the attorneys were that included such bribes in their fee estimates by the extraordinarily high price tag for their services. When receiving bids for services, John recalled one being 86 million pesos and another 38 million pesos—both from well-respected or famous private firms—whereas all other decent lawyers charged in the 10 to 15 million pesos range. Lesser-quality or younger lawyers charged 6 to 8 million pesos. Miami, Rubén, Ismael, and Cristián were unanimous in their consent that Chilean “justice” could be bought, and that the wealthy did not go to prison in the end. Karim's family, for instance, had money and had contracted one of the excessively high-priced attorneys to ensure such an outcome. Time would tell if doing so worked out for Karim. John was left to rely on the public defender's anticipated intelligent, graft-less defense before the Supreme Court day after next.

In the meantime, the Spanish translation of the first volume of *Bearing the Cross (Llevando la Cruz)* was now available for purchase from Amazon in the United States and Western Europe. It would hopefully soon be picked up by a Chilean publisher (through the efforts of Álvaro and

Cecilia) and would also be making its way to Chilean bookstores. John, now more than ever considered by many to be a political prisoner, figured that book would be his best defense before any honest Chilean judge as well as the court of public opinion. He maintained his faith.

Similarly, Miami was a man who would hold his principles no matter what. He had been convicted for sexually abusing his granddaughter Camila—something which he did not do nor did doing such a thing enter his mind—based on no other evidence than the girl’s word mined by a psychologist. The hospital exam did not show any conclusive evidence that she had been raped or abused. Yet the Chilean justice system chose to rely on the dubious premise that “children do not lie,” even though many psychologists and theologians say otherwise. Doctor María Luisa Cordero Velásquez, a famous Chilean psychologist with a television presence, says that children can lie and know the difference between right and wrong at around age five. Why would Camila lie? According to Miami, he set strict rules for schoolwork for any child living under his roof. Camila did not want to read the school book *Freddy el hunter* and he was pressuring her to do so. In order to win the dispute, Camila made up the abuse charge to assail her grandfather. Her mother, Jacqueline, and Miami’s wife, Margarita, both believed the tale, sadly leading to the legal dissolution of Miami and Margarita’s marriage of about forty years. Why they believed the girl is unclear since she produced no evidence to support the claim. Did Miami, naval aviator whose military career began at age fourteen, have real affairs in his life previously that would have caused his wife to doubt him? He said, “No.”

Nevertheless, Miami did point out that in the years just prior to being falsely accused by Camila, his wife started to doubt him based on her imagination running away with her—what Chileans call *pasando películas*. For instance, he had stuck a bunch of photographs of himself and some European female colleagues, taken when he was working on a project in Germany. He had hidden the photographs in the rafters of his workshop specifically because he knew how jealous his somewhat-unstable wife might become. She inadvertently found them when the cable man was installing a new television line. She assumed the worst, that the ladies were his girlfriends, and began to convince her daughters that their father had been unfaithful.

In another case, Miami was working on a project again in Europe, and his boss invited him, along with his fellow Chilean crew members, to come to his daughter’s birthday party. Nicolette Sacha Braun was either 16 or 17 years old at the time. She danced with Miami and the other men, having a memorable time, and her aunt made sure that the friendly relationship was maintained over time. Twelve or thirteen years later (when she was 29), she applied to be (and was accepted as) a postgraduate exchange student at a Chilean university. As a German, she had completed her college training in Stuttgart. She was coming to Chile on an exchange program, and was currently staying at the posh hotel inside the Viña del Mar casino. She called Miami, who did not respond at first, but left so many missed calls that his wife became suspicious. Yet, he handed his wife the phone when she asked to use it without hesitation. Had he been trying to hide something, like an adulterous relationship with a lady nearly thirty years younger than him, he would have deleted the missed calls record and never would have allowed his wife to look at his phone until it was clean. But he gave it to her, being a transparent man with nothing to hide. Unfortunately, his wife Margarita was a very jealous woman and was convinced by her conjecture that her husband had been unfaithful. John thought, “Margarita is worse than Pamela, who also makes important decisions based on conjecture and has also been guilty of *pasando películas*.” Miami and the other men in the room listening to the conversation concurred that, in

general, Chilean women behave this way and frequently question the fidelity of their husbands.

Misunderstandings and conjecture can lead to dramatic consequences in Chile. When Miami finally spoke to Margarita about the missed calls, she was very uneasy and demanded that Miami bring Nicolette home to meet her. When he got her, the lovely blonde was very well made-up and pretty. Miami had no relationship with her other than she was the former Jewish boss' daughter that he met at a party and perhaps danced with once (as many other men did). Any thought that there was more to their relationship was absurd. Yet he was even more surprised to see that his wife was also dressed to kill when he returned with Nicolette. He had not seen his wife look so good in years! And then the "competition" began, with the wife presuming that the tall, blonde, blue-eyed young lady was his mistress from overseas. Miami had been a principled family man and he explained to his wife that he had never been unfaithful to her. Nicolette was a former boss' daughter, and Miami was simply showing his gratitude by being willing to help her during her stay to Chile. The wife didn't believe it, and when Miami was accused by his granddaughter Camila, Margarita jumped to the conclusion that Miami must be guilty. However, there was no evidence of him either being an adulterer or a child abuser. Nevertheless, she decided to separate from her husband of over 35 years of marriage and eventually legally divorce him after 42 years based on her pure, sadly errant, speculation. Notwithstanding this grief, Miami had been a faithful husband, father, and grandfather.

Miami voluntarily gave his statement to police detectives and the prosecutor, but to no avail. He tried to talk to the prosecutor again on several occasions, documented in a letter from the prosecutor's secretary, but the prosecutor refused to see him. Furthermore, he allowed the police photographer to come into his home and take pictures. That professional had no warrant to do so, providing proof that Miami had let him into his home voluntarily. Yet, stunningly, at trial the prosecutor claimed that Miami did *not* cooperate with the investigation, thereby denying him a mitigating legal circumstance that would have cut his sentence in half. They also, incredibly, denied him another mitigating circumstance that would have halved-again his sentence: irreproachable prior conduct. This exclusion showed a terrible bias and legal error since Miami not only had no prior criminal record, he had not so much as had a traffic citation in forty years. He refused to cop a plea (bargain) since he said he was innocent and could not lie by saying he did something wrong. So he was unjustly sentenced to prison for eight years, without any reduction for mitigating circumstances. He appealed to the Supreme Court and had been waiting three years for his case to be heard, something that in itself is incredibly abusive.

After a year of his own unjust imprisonment, John was usually able to tell who was a criminal and who was not by their words and deeds. Miami showed no shame or remorse for his "crime" since his conscience was clear. He had no problem being named and written about in this book, unlike Sergio and Rubén, who were found guilty of sexual abuse but did not want their last names mentioned. They were ashamed of something. Their victims did not come forward and admit they had lied in court and thus clear the "perpetrators'" names. Like Mauricio and Aaron, who fell into similar circumstances but claimed their innocence, John wanted to believe them but could not be sure based on their words and actions. Maybe they were innocent, maybe they were not. All of them had treated John well at times, especially Sergio and Aaron, but John did not detect in either of them a life dedicated to principle, or of a true faith that constantly directed their lives in doing good works and service that revealed a non-selfish, non-criminal mindset. He saw pragmatic action designed to alleviate their bad circumstances and service actions wrought

to earn them sycophant status—none of which manifested their innocence.

Dedication to principle, honesty, trustworthiness, and good works were evident in both John and Miami's lives. John could also detect some of the same innocence and good works in Ismael, Guillermo, and, taking into account deviations due to his bipolar disorder, Manuel. For all their faults, they were not criminals. Over the long run, both John and Miami had gotten along well with nearly everyone they met and had no standing conflicts. (Even *Che* reportedly sent his greetings to John from 112 and Castro had been treating him well.) Both men were well-known in prison and were well-liked by *gendarme* and *reo* alike, with few (if any) exceptions—especially super-servicial Miami who was always eager to help the infirm or elderly and to do far more clean up, planting, and food service in 118's *patio* than was required of him. No one was looking to assail either man, like many at first had threatened to do to John. Sergio and Aaron were likeable, too, but would probably have been stabbed, cut, or beat up in other *módulos*. Indeed, Aaron, like Anibal, Alexander, and Alexis, had been sent to 118 to escape such abuse. Like John, Miami was not looking to profit from other *reos* while doing good or being generous. He was trying to make the best of a bad situation while maintaining his faith and principles. Moreover, he harbored no bitterness or hatred for Camila, Jacqueline, or Margarita.

John harbored no bitterness either, even though the next day Michael once again offered to take care of Ahumada if John would only bring him a gun. It was a strange offer in general, especially because he made it while so many others were listening, and because he included details about how John would drive his pickup in front of Ahumada's residence and then hand the gun off to Michael so that he could do the job right then and there. For all John knew, the *machucado* was trying to set him up. He had been trying to impress John, who had commented the day before that Michael's language was filthy (*soez*). However, Michael did not possess a vocabulary sophisticated enough to understand that word. (John had just read it in Hermógenes' book, *soez* being found on page 165, and Miami had defined it for him.) So Michael had come back the next day asking John if he had any books in Spanish that he could practice reading in order to show him that he was not merely a blabbering, ignorant dolt. That would be hard to prove since John considered him to be a near-idiotic motor-mouth who often defied Proverbs 18:13, "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him," and whom John—Bible in hand—chided him for breaking with that principle. His rebuke came on the heels of giving Michael a clove to douse the pain in his breached molar. (Pamela somehow managed to get a little bag of cloves through *encomienda* inspection.) John showed little partiality in prison—not even to dolts.

Michael also seemed to play a role in setting up what otherwise seemed to be a spontaneous chess match between John and Ivo, a *reo* around age 40 who was being freed the next day and was spending his last night in prison in 118A. Ivo was one of the better players John had faced while in prison, and perhaps Michael knew that he was good. John beat him the first game and went off to do his bathroom-cleaning job before the rematch. Meanwhile, Ivo thrashed Ismael and Rubén twice apiece and was eager to play John again. Congruently, skinny Michael, who preferred checkers (*damas*), stood there egging John on, suggesting that he might be afraid of Ivo—even though he had already beat the challenger. The scene was curious since Michael could not even identify which piece was a castle without Ivo's help. John's concern was simply that there was no time, since Cisternas, who was in charge of 118 that day, would order them upstairs in just ten minutes. Ivo insisted on playing after Michael had gone off to talk to his "friend" Cisternas to get permission, so the game began—with Miami, Ismael, Rubén and others

watching. But the extension of time was hardly long enough and the two players left off the game in the middle. All was not lost, however. Ivo had heard of John's valiant efforts in Reñaca against the horde of communist and leftist rabble. In parting he said, "American, I am proud to be able to say that I played chess with you, and I can't wait to tell all my friends that I did so." Once again, John's fame left him speechless. He simply smiled and shook Ivo's hand. He mused, too, about whether there really was anything positive or good about being the most famous convict in Chile.

Michael was learning a lot recently, kind of like him getting a high school booster shot, starting with John baiting him a bit to see if he could get a controlled reaction of ire, which he could, and then later explaining to him why a good chess match was far more exciting than watching twentytwo men running behind a ball on a soccer field. That remark really cut poor Michael to the core but he had tried to hold in his outrage in order to gain the euphoria that would come from Ivo's possible triumph. His education did not end there. Earlier, Miami, Ismael, and Rubén had also explained how *reos* fermented *rancho* rice (most commonly) and fruit, sealing it in a plastic or glass bottle for fifteen days to make liquor that Chileans call *chicha*. Both John and Michael were students in that class, although John had zero interest in either making or drinking such a brew, and Michael claimed (to everyone's surprise) that he did not like to drink alcoholic beverages. Miami and Rubén recounted a story that transpired before John's arrival in 118. A big bottle—five liters—of *chicha* was being made in the *bodega* (long before Silva tore out its walls). One important thing about *chicha* production is that the accumulated gasses must be let out each day. Unfortunately, this was not done and when the bottle was finally opened after nearly a week, the loud explosion ended up covering the simpleton *reo* with the elixir and splattered the rest throughout the *bodega*. *Suboficial mayor* González became suspicious immediately and the *reos* had to quickly expend a large jug of Clorox-equivalent to douse the smell. A big lesson was learnt. Miami also taught John (with the others overhearing) the meaning of the Chilean saying, "Never spit up at the sky," which was akin to shooting oneself in the foot. Accordingly, Michael had increased his overall knowledge base significantly that day, and John, who was always amazed at the life skills one could amass in jail, suggested that Michael borrow and read the copy of his book *Políticas Públcas* that he had given to Rubén—who had never yet taken time to read it. Time would tell if Michael would actually take him up on the idea. Reading was not easy.

Before Cisternas arrived that day, after 9 a.m., another *machucado* pest, Aníbal, had been ragging on John for not scooping up the floor soot, which he had incorrectly called "garbage" (*basura*), that he had whisked into the hall. The nocturnal *paco* often opened John's cell door as if he were a *ranchero* needing to head out early for slave labor, giving John access to the hall. John took advantage of Cisternas' tardiness to clean up a bit, but he had no dustpan since some *machucado* had stolen it (along with lots of other things) from his previous cell. Carlos and Sergio (the latter always seeming to look out for John) were out in the hallway, enjoying their sycophant *mozo* status. They eyed and then chided John for being outside his cell, noting that the *pacos* have cameras turned on and would get him if he were not careful. John had temporarily moved his plastic chair, bag of trash, and bath towel into the hallway in order to make room to sweep. John was not worried that a *gendarme* would hassle him over the infraction any more than they would for kissing Pamela during quarantine-era visitation; he was a favorite son. Nonetheless, in order to protect John, after lending him his dustpan, little pervert Carlos exercised authority he did not have: he bolted and latched John into his cell. John took it in stride

and sang three additional hymns in retaliation. Confrontations with petty tyrants were hardly worth getting worked up over. He then asked Pamela to bring him a plastic dustpan in the upcoming *encomienda*, especially now that the Supreme Court had once again postponed his hearing until the following Thursday. If he was going to be incarcerated a while longer, he had better get all the cleaning tools he needed. He would probably also need to load up on more cash and vitamins, which his friends and family had been so graciously providing. A pair of U.S. size 12½ or 13 soft-leather slip-ons and a wooden backscratcher would also be nice things to send (or bring) Pamela to go in the next *encomienda* bag.

John also used the extra time to reorganize his *patio* backpack, which contained his wooden chess set, his reading book (now John Grisham's novel, *The Partner*, written in English—to Ismael's chagrin), an Italian verbs book and an Italian dictionary, a couple of plastic pens, a couple packs of cigarettes (used for bribing guards or making anyone who needed to be happier happy), a plastic plate, two small plastic cups and two little plastic bowls, butter and raspberry jam (usually), plastic cutlery (that other *reos* borrowed), a metal knife, fork, and spoon, a partial roll of toilet paper, a plastic salt shaker, and laundry soap (also used to wash hands in the *pesebre*). John added to this base materiel his four items of plasticware used to hold sandwiches, chips, cookies, and candies, all liberally distributed to *reos*, along with a reused zippable *tortilla* bag filled with either warm *quesadillas*, peanut-butter filled celery sticks, or peanut butter and raspberry jelly sandwiches, which John also shared with his prison pals and, on occasion, certain *machucados*. Those creature comforts made bearable John's never-ending cycle of *patio* life.

Accordingly, some of the penitentiary's more comfortable "creatures" continued to respond favorably to John, with Miami bringing him an onion, a tomato, a lemon, and a tiny avocado the next day (so, added to the ingredients Pamela would bring him, he could make *guacamole* to share), and with Marcelo slipping him a couple slices of watermelon through the portal the following day—when Penailillo was running the show in 118 with his normal, happy demeanor. The sharing was more than reciprocal. John's Friday meal guests Miami, Rubén, Ismael, Delfín, and Michael, along with Saturday's pizza-meat-and-golden potatoes food-share fest participants Miami, Rubén, Ismael, and both Sergios, feasted sumptuously on what Pamela had brought them through *encomienda*. Furthermore, always well-paid, powerful, and thus comfortable judicial "creatures" also shared other niceties. One of the Chief Justices of the Supreme Court in Santiago, Guillermo Enrique Silva Gundelach, sent a memorandum that John's case would be (again) given preferential standing and be heard on January 28th. Lawyer Fabiola García forwarded it to John. After so much delay and disappointment, he was not sure whether to believe it.

Chapter XII Not Given Us a Spirit of Fear, but of Power

While John was walking on the *patio*—arriving late because Carlos once again neglected to unlock and open his cell door—Rubén noticed the tear across his other pant leg. Rubén was particularly attentive that day, having been the one to alert the sycophants that John was still locked in his cell after hearing him singing “How Great Thou Art” from his window. Miami was doing John’s laundry and later that day sewed John’s now hobo-look cotton slacks. He was starting to look a little down on his luck. Pamela and Jana would have to go out to the American store in Viña del Mar and see if they could find another pair of pants his size and slip them into an upcoming *encomienda* bag, just like she was able to do with the dustpan (wooden handle not allowed) that arrived today.

In addition, even more goodies were in store for John. The twin-size mattress (as opposed to the tortuous identical single-size foam slabs that *reos* were given by the *gendarme* central planners)—that Miami had cleaned the mildew off—had been sitting in the hallway outside Aníbal and Franco’s cell for days. Franco had paid 20,000 pesos for this supposedly “new” creature comfort to someone in 105 but could not make it work in his cell. So he offered to sell it to John at cost, who was led by his chronic shoulder pain to accept the deal. For another 10,000 pesos, Aníbal would rent a hand-held grinder (*galletón*) and come the next day, cutting off John’s upper bunk supports to make room for the much larger mattress—meaning the bed could never again sleep more than two *reos*. If John could sleep better (and possibly eliminate pain) for forty bucks, and be guaranteed not to have two cellmates in the future, he was game. His fitted sheets were already twin size anyway—being oversized for the narrow single beds he had been forced to sleep on for well over a year. Pamela transferred the cash to the account indicated by Franco.

Neighboring *ranchero* Angelino (47) also appeared around the time John and Franco struck their bargain. “So you have been writing?,” he asked John, who gave a weak affirmative, unsure of why this heretofore stranger was making such an inquiry. He explained that he, too, had been writing about his jail experiences but was awaiting his probation or freedom before publishing. He had been in jail for most of thirty years, since age seventeen. He came from a family of criminals and robbers, noting his conviction that he was born with criminal DNA, as opposed to those who learned to be criminals later in life. He said that, growing up, everything in his house was stolen from someone else. His father and three brothers had all been with him in the Valparaíso penitentiary at the same time. There was a cell in some *módulos* just for his family members at some points, while at others they were spread around in different *módulos*. Being in jail was part of their lives and chosen profession. He had lived in *módulos* 103 (old), 104, 105, 114, and 115. “Why haven’t you been released on probation before now?,” John asked, “and why such a long sentence?” He replied that he had been out now and then, fathering six children by six different women. Some of his kids were adults and others were still kids or babies. He had tried to escape four times previously, once shooting a *carabinero* (police officer) multiple times—even after the cop was on the ground—all of which undermined any probation possibility. The cop lived but the charges of attempted murder of a police officer, robbery, and related crimes had added up to him spending almost thirty years in jail—about two-thirds of his life.

Now he spent his days preparing food for other *reos*, hoping to get a *dominical* benefit soon. He further confirmed that John was a *vivo* and not a *choro*, which John found amusing. John just

thought it strange to be talking so casually with a man like Angelino, who seemed like a normal, everyday kind of guy that one might meet in public. He imagined there would be lots of such nice guys in eternal hell, too, just like in this terrestrial one. Angelino could just as well have been living next door to John in Reñaca like he was in the next cell down. Or he might have been a man who broke in and stole John's possessions.

Earlier that day, *ranchero* Alexis Enrique Ortiz Sepúlveda (64), the Evangelical (Church of God), had made a surprise appearance on the *patio*. His mission was to find and ask John if he could move into his cell. Mauricio and Elwin, with whom he lived presently, watched "satanic" things on television and were terrible task masters with unbending rules. John remembered all too well what a hassle it was to have had to put up with Mauricio's rules. Alexis, a short, facially scarred, portly man who was convicted of attempted murder after cracking a man's skull open (defending himself after a man had first hit him with a board across the face), had fallen from the top bunk and injured himself, too, just as John had in October 2020. He was itching to leave. John told him that he preferred to live alone, citing his lack of television, plus writing and Zoomcast teaching activities with Historic Baptists. Alexis was very happy to hear it. He said he just read his Bible most of the time and would hardly be bothered by such activities. John explained that he had once mentioned to Sergio (*chuncoco*) that he would like to live with Alexis —assuming that Cisternas was going to force him to have a cellmate. But Sergio said that he did not want any *rancheros* mixed with 118 core people since the former, evangelical or not, are known to settle their disputes with a knife. John did not believe that sentiment but there was little he could do, and in the meantime he was happy to be living alone. Pamela definitely wanted John to live alone, but John reminded her that it would be better to pick a good cellmate than to have some *machucado* thrust into the cell. John also told Alexis that it was likely that Guillermo would be returning to 118 that week after the "technical council" met, and that his cell was the planned landing place for Guillermo. Alexis, John thought, might be as good or better than Guillermo, but he was still an unknown quantity. Yet he also saw his duty to help a Christian brother to be important—if in fact he really was one. Preaching in 109's *patio*, he sure seemed to be. So John asked Alexis to patiently wait out the week to see what happened.

John returned to his cell alone, happy to have good food and pizza, even if the evening was interrupted by a long 5.9 Richter-Scale earthquake, with epicenter in the Farallones ski area above Santiago. Such magnitudes are no big deal in Chile, and John and Pamela continued their conversation while their respective buildings shook without much fuss. Thirty minutes before, a 7.0 quake struck Antarctica, but concerns about a tsunami hitting Valparaíso were quickly discarded. Still, there was nothing quite like being in a prison cell when an earthquake hit.

Castro was in a bad mood the next day, scolding one *machucado* fiercely. But it was otherwise a normal Sunday, with private worship in the morning and the Historic Baptists Zoomcast in the afternoon. There was a little jolt of an earthquake (3.7 on the Richter Scale) as John lied on his bed. Once again, no big deal. John got part of his laundry back from Miami that had to be refolded and put away (Miami always left clothing items inside out and folded them like that). He also got his sheets back clean and fit them across his new mattress. Aníbal had cut off the two bed posts at John's feet. The new width was fabulous although the mattress was really soft. John could not wait to see if he slept better and that his shoulder soreness would depart. Downstairs, earlier, John made up seven scrumptious chicken/pork, cheese, and guacamole burritos. He ate two, Miami, Ismael, and Rubén one each, then one to Franco and another to *ranchero* Tito (he

had seen and asked for one when he entered the dining room). He specialized in stealing things from purses and backpacks without the owner knowing. Everyone thought these simple burritos were exquisite. The only downside for John is that he would have fewer vegetables this week for himself. At least Marcelo stopped by and slipped a couple of peaches through the portal. Before lockup, John also got a chance to talk a bit more with Alexis, who was on three days' leave from *rancho* (tea and squash) preparation after cutting his finger. He still seemed to be a serious Christian.

Cisternas arrived on time on January 25th—visitation day. Pamela, however, arrived thirty minutes late. “The taxi ran into some fog which caused a delay,” she said. (That fact did little to alleviate John’s disappointment.) She did manage to leave 40,000 pesos for John at the *gendarme* service window, along with his needed medications. Their visitation was wonderful, even though she thought that John had lost weight (a view not shared by those in 118). The couple almost immediately took off their required masks and moved in to sit very close to one another—accompanied by all the marital affection one might expect from loving spouses who had not seen each other in a month. In total, there were nine *reos* and nine visitors. (No other *módulos* had visitation that day.) John also gave Pamela two books he had read to bring home—another action that was technically against the rules, but then again so were hugging, kissing, touching, hand-holding, etc. The *gendarmes* did not care. The exaggerated government rules afflicting people under the Covid-19 quarantine were ridiculous, if not Draconian. The couple had come to believe that the so-called “pandemic” was not as serious as the government and media had led everyone to believe. Thus, the *gendarmes* were not enforcing those rules. Even the gel alcohol dispenser mounted on the wall behind Pamela was empty.

Back at 118, the day was fairly boring for most people. Few *reos* were out on the *patio* and Ruben was infirm with back pain in his cell. Therefore, no one played chess and Miami tended to his laundry service, also being kind enough to do John’s bathroom cleaning chore while he was at visitation. Besides some *rancheros*, only John, Jorge, and Cristián had visitors. After John returned, Sergio (from 118B) was quick to swoop down on his potato chips and Doritos. Too, John shared a piece of his ham and cheese sandwich with Miami, after Ismael refused it, although for reasons unbeknownst to John Miami decided to give it to Maroni instead—who thought it was fabulous. Who wouldn’t, whose normal fare was *rancho*? John had earlier shared a half lemon with Michael, something which was quite prized. The atmosphere ended up being happy and friendly for the most part, even though Delfín called Sergio (from 118B) a queer for kissing him on the head.

At the end of *patio* time, Naomi Órdenes, a friendly young lawyer affiliated with the public defender’s office, came to see John in 118. She seemed to be right-wing politically. Cisternas let the two use his office to talk. In the public defender’s opinion, there was a very high probability that John’s case would be heard on Thursday. She was excited to meet with John, because she had a client in Santiago with similar circumstances to those in John’s case. Her client, Francisco Camplá, “The *pistolero* (gunman) of La Dehesa,” fired once at leftist protesters in early November 2019, albeit differing from John in that he lacked a license to legally transport his weapon. Like John, he was charged with attempted murder and for unjustifiably shooting his gun in public. Yet, some other notable differences existed between the cases. For one, unlike John, Francisco was drunk; secondly his bullet was aimed directly at the protestors but hit no one. He did not fire in self-defense like John did; he was angry, while John kept his cool while under

pressure. John and Naomi strategized a little about how they might improve John's case, noting that it was likely that Claudio Fierro alone would be arguing for a new trial. She was elated to meet John, finally, and apologetic that her law firm in Viña del Mar was so cowardly when John was first arrested. They had decided not to take his case for fear of public reprisals. John introduced her to the first volume of this book, *Bearing the Cross*, and discussed how it might be useful in his case—especially if it were given to the judges. She was intrigued with the idea and said she would run it by Guillermo Améstica. After hearing about it, he determined it would not be a good idea, and not even appropriate. That evening, John worked with Valentín, Bob, Joe, and Martín to get both of his latest books ready to publish, in both electronic and print versions. Accordingly, very good progress was made.

Progress in prison took various forms, depending on the *reo*. Aaron was noticeably gaining weight but said he was much happier spending all day inside the building where he worked with wood and was able to read his Bible and pray without being ridiculed. He, Carlos, and Aníbal were, it seemed, constantly doing woodworking on the first floor—even after the others were locked in their cells. Ismael had definitely been progressing in his chess game, although he lost three straight to John that day. His overall winning percentage had risen to perhaps thirty percent in recent weeks—more than double Rubén's. Others seemed to be progressing in their poker playing, even though the game with Miami, Ismael, and Delfín broke down that day when a fifth queen was played (and Delfín was suspect).

John's English teaching resumed when, desirous to progress in his English, Necúlman showed up by surprise—awakening John to continue his lessons. The *gendarme* said he had had a family problem and then moved into a new home in Temuco, prohibiting him from coming to class for so long. (He worked seven days, living at the penitentiary complex, then was at home seven days.) He came a bit late, so he just asked John if they could play chess and talk a little English. John got the keys to the dining hall from Miami and then whooped Necúlman four straight, teaching him the names of the pieces and a little more chess movement terms, like “castling.” They mainly talked Spanish and He asked John's opinion about carrying a Beretta versus a Glock or a Sig Sauer pistol for protection. As a *gendarme*, he had a legal right to carry his gun for self-defense. He also asked John about his case, hoping that he would be set free soon. He mentioned that he would bring some bleu cheese, soy sauce, and BBQ sauce when he returned the next day.

Moreover, there was surprising progress made on legislation to pardon all people convicted of crimes pertaining to the 2019 and 2020 nationwide protests. The bill passed two out of three of the required Senate committees and would likely pass in the Senate itself and then move on to the House (*diputados*). While the new legislation was mainly designed to free hundreds of leftists, “anarchists,” thugs, and communists—who made up the bulk of the potential beneficiaries—it would also benefit fifteen public employees (mainly *carabineros*), John, and Francisco Camplá, among others. Of course, the bill had a long way to go since President Piñera had vowed to veto it, and overriding that veto would be more complicated. Nevertheless, the news was encouraging to John—although he was nonplussed by the idea of violent criminals being given a free pass, and both Miami and Michael brought it to his attention.

The biggest surprise of the day occurred earlier, at breakfast, when Alexis obtained approval from Cisternas to move into John's cell. So much for John's payment of 50,000 pesos to

guarantee him to be able to live alone! Alexis was an easy going Evangelical, not extremely bright but quite devout and without vices. John figured the two would coexist well together. He did have a lot more stuff than Guillermo, making the cell a bit crowded. Speaking of Guillermo, the technical council denied him the chef job he had sought, since his potential sentence would be short, probably eighteen months of which he had already served ten. Sadly, he would be consigned to the vicissitudes and grief of 111 for likely the lion's share of his sentence. John and Miami felt sorry for him. Alexis said there was also a good chance that he would be leaving before long, either for home arrest or a *CET*. In the meantime, there was little more John could do than make the best of the situation. At least Alexis was quiet as a mouse most of the time. He had been reading the book of Daniel. John shared a beef-and-cheese *quesadilla* with him, which he enjoyed very much. Apparently, Alexis would be bringing avocados on Saturday in order for John to make more *guacamole*.

The next morning, Castro chided the *reos* during formation for carrying on with loud screaming and banging on the cell door at night—for no good reason.“He was right,” said Rubén to John—who could not understand Castro’s mumbled *castellano* any more than he could the *flautes* or *machucados* talking *coa* or *chorizo*—“if the pacos come and discover liquor or drugs in one cell they will raid everyone’s and might even confiscate cell phones.” One-legged Jorge in 118A was the culprit in the case Castro raised. He basically went crazy after taking his medication and then drinking some wine or liquor, which he likely obtained from a *paco*. Most people knew that booze and pills don’t mix, but perhaps not him. In Jorge’s case, the combination led to some wild outrage and cussing (*groserías*) that everyone across the *patio* besides John could understand.

John was blissfully immune to verbal rubbish or criticisms, and he gave up trying to understand it long ago. The telling part for Chilean culture is that by most standards John’s Spanish was very good, perhaps an 8.5 on a scale from 1 to 10. He could read long novels or academic books in Spanish with good comprehension and almost as fast as in English. He made some grammatical mistakes when speaking at times, but not many. He conducted his social life mainly in Spanish, seldom speaking with any people in Chile in English. His communication with his monolingual wife Pamela was 100% in Spanish. He needed no translator during his trial or hearings. He had taught and preached for years in Spanish. Most North Americans would consider him to be perfectly fluent; in 1999 he got a perfect score of 800 on the CLEP exam for Spanish. Yet he was lost in the woods trying to understand low-class Chileans. Even after twentyfive years he could not comprehend them, as was the case when the *flautes* corralled his pickup in Reñaca on November 10, 2019 and asked him to get out and dance.

On the other end of the socio-economic spectrum were the Supreme Court justices who would hear John’s appeal the next day. According to briefs published on the Chilean Library of Congress (*BCN*) website, those men knock down about 9.4 million pesos (USD 12,750) per month, the same as congressmen and most cabinet members earn, and one of them who had retired a few years back was paid an incredible lifetime pension of 60 million pesos (USD 81,300) per month. (For reference, the president earns 9.7 million pesos per month.) These judges are among the top 0.00001% of income earners in Chile. In stark contrast were the prisoners, who earn almost nothing—even as *mozos*—and whose prestige is based on how well they can stand out from the pack and impress the *gendarmes*. (Top *gendarme* officers (managers) earn over 4 million pesos per month.) Chess was one such way to impress and that day John had beaten Rubén three more times and Ismael twice. But he also had done his hardly prestigious

bathroom-cleaning job thrice, while humble Alexis organized and cleaned their cell.

For John, a good day was getting BBQ sauce and bleu cheese in. Necúlman was supposedly going to bring some, although he did not show up as promised. At least Pamela had left some sauces and vitamins with Panchito to bring the following day. “I am retiring after vacation in February, so this will be my last run,” he told Pamela. That fact would make John’s prison life harder, but there was little John or Pamela could do about it short of finding another courier. Speaking of Pamela, who was set to begin her required-for-citizenship Italian lessons the following week, she had finally been back to the doctor with her examinations in hand. The doctor was still concerned by what he saw and ordered further testing. Other than the stress caused by worrying about Pamela’s health, John’s health was improving as his new mattress seemed to be mitigating his left shoulder pain. “Yet, that fact did not change sanitary conditions in 118,” John mused, as he sat in the sunshine reading. Some filthy bird had just dropped two white splotches on the concrete just a meter away from where John was sitting. Everwatchful Daniel, sitting four meters from John, smirked and whinnied as he heard and saw the lovely splats. They were just one of many prison hazards.

The next day, John ’s mind was on the Supreme Court hearing more than chess, but he did beat Rubén four times and lost once after giving up his queen. (Now just two wins shy of the 1,500 mark.) Ismael did not feel like playing. He had been battered a lot lately. So John was able to finish Grisham’s novel with the extra free time. Miami had asked John to bring down his laundry and tennis shoes to wash early since a rare Summer rainstorm was forecast for Saturday. John did so. Just as *patio* time was about to end, Castro summoned John to his den and ordered him to go to the infirmary to get some medicine. Panchito had his salsas that Pamela picked up and some vitamins from Valentín. Unfortunately, Pamela did not get his multivitamins, meaning that John would have to live with the cracks opening up on the sides of his mouth. John made the mistake of trying to talk logically with Castro, who needed to be convinced that it was more efficient to get his stuff out of the freezer and carry it and his chair and backup upstairs instead of just getting his Covid-19 mask and leaving his stuff in the dining hall. Castro gave his miffed approval but when John got back down, Sergio (from 118B) started asking him things from the *patio* doorway. That was it! Castro blew his little top and asked, “Did I not order you to go?” John gave him a thumbs up, without saying another word. He took off without finishing his conversation with Sergio. Castro reminded him, the sycophants, and others within earshot who was in charge. When John returned with his goodies, after saying his heartfelt good-byes to Panchito (as it was his last day of work—age 66, twenty-two years of service), Castro eyed John and with a happy tone said, “Did everything go well?” John replied in the affirmative and then acquired permission to go to his cell. His day outside was over, and Necúlman never showed up to make him go back down.

However, his in-cell life was hopping. Guillermo messaged John that day that the Appeals Court had sentenced him to three years and one day in prison, without the possibility of home arrest. That really stunk. He had to find a way to survive in 111 or a worse *módulo* now that he was condemned. For John, the biggest news of the day was that the Supreme Court finally heard his appeal. Lawyers Guillermo Améstica, Fabiola García, and David Zúñiga filled him in on some details. The Court’s decision would come out on February 17th. Judges Haroldo Brito Cruz (Chief Justice), Leopoldo Llanos Sagristá, Juan Manuel Muñoz Pardo (Substitute Justice), and two lawyers acting as justices Diego Munita Luca and María Cristina Gajardo Harboe, presided

over the hearing. Améstica was happy with the outcome. He, Zúñiga, and Francisco Bustos all said that courtroom number 2 was really good and favorable for John, although he was unsure exactly why. He just took it by faith that it would have been worse for him in another courtroom. He was also concerned that Carlos Kunsemuller was not among the presiding judges, whom Améstica had attached such importance to earlier as a man who was expert in attempted murder cases. Now Améstica didn't seem to mind his absence. "Why then did the defense choose to postpone the hearing during December waiting for Kunsemuller if he was not really necessary after all?", John wondered. Guillermo Enrique Silva Gundelach, who sent notice of that day's hearing, was also not among the judges who presided. John wondered about the significance of that fact, too.

One thing that was clear is that the communist lawyers for Ahumada, Oliva and Diaz, did not show up. Améstica speculated that they were not paid. Neither did the vile prosecutor Rojas show up, and Améstica was not sure why. The district attorney's office sent a replacement, Hernán Ferrera. (It was vacation time after all.) Only Lagos, the dorky, mumbling, befuddled lawyer representing the Valparaíso regional government, showed up from the trial prosecution "team." So John and others guessed those absences meant the hearing went well for him. Nevertheless, John was represented by the public defender's national group, but was disappointed that star attorney Claudio Fierro, whose presence had been anticipated for months, did not argue his case. Instead, Sebastián Undurraga del Río was sent in to pinch hit—a fact which made John uneasy. Who was he and was he just as competent as Fierro? He and two other lawyers were listed as regular team members, along with Fierro, on the public defender's website. "At least they didn't just pick him up last-minute from a Santiago homeless shelter," John mused. Still, John was not fond of surprises, and he was a little displeased that Améstica had not explained things well (perhaps indicating that he himself did not fully understand the situation). Nevertheless, John decided that he had to rest in the Providence of God.

John's lawyers were specifically asking for a new trial. Whether they could also preclude the attempted murder charges was unclear to John—ditto for if they could change him to home arrest, although Fabiola said that could be done in a separate process after a favorable outcome on February 17th. In the final analysis, Fierro, Undurraga, Améstica, and the rest of the national public defender's team that prepared and argued John's appeal thought he did well and they expected a favorable outcome in twenty days—whether that meant just a retrial (which cannot occur for at least six months after the original trial) or also reduced charges, and perhaps eventually a change from prison to home arrest. John figured it was best for his sanity to stay optimistic and rest in his faith. He set his evening focus on teaching his class on Chilean Baptist history.

Améstica later explained and clarified for John the possible outcomes of the Supreme Court hearing: (1) everything stays the same, (2) the lower court ruling is annulled and a new trial is ordered, or (3) the lower court ruling is annulled and the charge of attempted murder is changed to assault and battery, coupled with the corresponding reduction in sentence; in that case there is no new trial. The Court never rules on home arrest or other alternative detention measures. He also commented about attorney Undurraga. He was from the national defense team, led by Fierro. Améstica understood that one may confide in him fully, and he makes appearances in that courtroom every day. Furthermore, courtroom number 2 was not bad for John and his defense team. In prior weeks, the appeal was not heard due to the number of add-on cases. He believed

that by waiting a good result would emerge.

Chapter XIII Redeeming the Time

Optimism about John's case reigned the next day in 118, especially emanating from Miami. John was generally content himself, but the optimism ran in the background, only emerging here and there. In reality, it was a potpourri day, with lots of little things happening, facilitated by the relative calm that was present with Cisternas in charge. Alexis fended off a suggestion that two indicted *carabineros* (cops), presently in quarantine in *módulo* 110, would soon be lodged with John, forcing Alexis out. Worried, Alexis spoke with the *rancho* sergeant and pleaded with him to persuade the powers that be not to pull him out of John's cell. As a result, the two cops were instead supposedly directed to another part of 118, although they never actually appeared. John had no idea that was going on during the morning, but was glad to hear the outcome. He had been focused on beating Rubén and Ismael in chess in order to reach the 1,500-victory mark (versus 137 losses and 33 draws). He was a shining victor, as were his now pure white sneakers that Miami had washed. He re-laced them in the dining hall while playing chess and snacking.

Apart from his eyesight, his main physical problem was no longer the bearable chronic shoulder pain but rather the acute pain in his left knee, which had been operated on in 1991 and again in 2012—removing all the cartilage. A frontal tendon or muscle attached to the distal femur had caused some serious discomfort for two nights and now John was having trouble walking. He took Dipirona (Metamizol) and Paracetamol he had left over from when he was sick with Covid-19 and pneumonia in 109, hoping it would work. But it did little to ease the pain. John was normally not the sort to self-medicate but in prison what else could one do? The day before, Miami noticed that John was not walking well, but that turned out to be due to the tongue of his right leather dress shoe (worn while his Adidas were drying), which had buckled over and was scrunched on the top of his foot. Once again, John had to worry just how much trouble he would be if he made it to old age. Maybe there was some relationship between such oversights and the lack of vitamins that were also causing the edges of his mouth to crack again?

At least he did not have fat feet like Rubén, who basked barefoot in the sun. He could not recall ever seeing such pudgy, stumpy toes. Rubén himself was rather short (170 centimeters) and weighed 110 kilograms. Turning away from that unsightly vista, and despite his knee pain, John did manage to get the *patio* bathroom assigned to him cleaned, using Miami's new method of scooping up the wastewater into the long-handled dustpan and pouring it into the toilet. He also used that equipment to scoop up the used toilet paper and flush it instead of dumping it into a trash can. Miami did not like that nasty water accumulating under the *pesebre*—in its natural course finding the lowest ground—despite John's efforts to spread it out, across the *patio*, to dry.

Most of John's day was taken up reading a few dozen pages in another novel, John Irving's *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, and undertaking some relatively interesting conversation in the dining hall. The first chat started by John pestering Michael about his lying, manipulative friend Ahumada not sending his two commie lawyers to the hearing the day before. Michael insisted, "Ahumada is not my friend but rather an acquaintance from my neighborhood that I have known for years. It is good for you that his lawyers did not show up." John was sure that on the next Sunday-home day allowed, Michael would let Ahumada know that he knew John and what he thought of him. John had maintained the facts of the incident throughout his unjust

incarceration: Ahumada and others had assailed him and he defended himself by firing to dissuade the aggression. He underscored that fact with Michael, who had a hard time getting over the fact that Ahumada had a bullet wound in his thigh while John was uninjured—as if to say that one's self-defense is illegitimate unless he is injured. Michael still had a lot to learn.

John also taught him and Ismael about *discrimination*, which is a loaded term used in public policy to arbitrarily single out certain classes or groups of people for special treatment based on some physical or behavioral characteristic. The two men were fomenting the idea that discriminating in favor of a normal man versus a homosexual was different than discriminating against one kind of bread in favor of another. Miami jumped in to show that all choice necessarily requires discrimination. As John said, he discriminated against all other women when he married Pamela, and Michael discriminated against beef when he chose to eat chicken. Such is the nature of cost-minimizing and satisfaction-maximizing human behavior. There is simply nothing wrong or immoral about practicing discrimination, an activity common to all, no matter what arbitrary public policy decrees dictate.

Michael, as if a lightbulb had been turned on inside his head, then reformulated his argument to complain that John should not be out there criticizing normal people for their mistaken understanding of things but rather go after congressmen. Yet, he had no more to say once John revealed that he was an activist who had preached Psalm 94:20 outside of Congress, and attended sessions inside (to Rubén's surprise), too, heckling leftist Senator Letelier and others. That psalm asks, "Shall the throne of iniquity, which devises evil by law, have fellowship with You?" John had also participated in a pro-life march through Viña del Mar. Again, Michael was learning something and also growing in knowledge about the man he was speaking to. Later on, he again asked if he could move into John's cell. John replied that he was now living with Alexis, to Michael's chagrin. John could hardly imagine being cooped-up with a friendly, ignorant motor-mouth like Michael for eighteen hours a day.

Then came Michael's diatribe about the virtue of abortion in rape cases in order to get rid of an undesirable baby or person. John dismantled his argument by helping Michael see that it was not the unborn's fault that his father was a rapist, and that as an innocent human being he did not deserve to be sliced up limb-by-limb with a razor-edged suction tube. Rape is horrible, but killing an innocent person doubles the crime. Do what you will to the rapist but do not kill the innocent person. If John and Ismael were neighbors and good friends, would they be justified in applying capital punishment to newcomer Michael just because they considered him to be unwanted or undesirable? There are plenty of people wanting to adopt a baby. Let the raped mother recoup some of her terrible loss by selling the rights to the baby. People in the U.S.A. regularly pay up to 50,000 dollars for a baby. Michael was appalled by the idea of commercializing human reproduction. John replied, "Would the innocent child prefer to be cut up (or saline burned) and killed or live with the lifelong ignominy of knowing that his mother sold the rights to raise and care for him to loving parents?" Discussion ended.

John could get by understanding Michael's "Spanish" with Rubén, Miami, or Ismael translating for him (note: Cristián's translation did little good since his diction and enunciation were almost as bad as Michael's). However, it was nearly impossible to understand the reticent and introverted Sergio (from 118B). John tried his best, notwithstanding, and after a twenty-minute, one-on-one over some chips, Sergio got up and said with a smile that he had had

a good conversation with John. John himself had been happy to try to communicate, although he secretly wished Sergio would leave off the kisses and caressing as a greeting. Sergio pointed out again that he had been in jail for eleven years, having lost most of his 20s and early 30s. John figured the distortion in his manners and affection was probably predictable, especially since he had no visitors and would probably never touch anyone otherwise. Ismael's case was similar, except that he did not have a child like Sergio did, whose girlfriend had shacked up with another man since Sergio's incarceration and never brought the child (12) to visitation. John could not help but have compassion on this wayward Catholic. His tragic tales were truer than Michael's ramblings—which were often odder than a “spectacled” bear making an appearance in the far northern Chilean *altiplano*—and one could feel the loss of an important span of his life by his demeanor. Yet, he seemed to enjoy having a father figure around.

Moroni could not fill that void for him, although even he had been warming up to John after Miami again donated half of one of John's delicious sandwiches to him. Moroni got bolder, too, asking John for candy, being a little envious when seeing him giving some to Daniel and Delfín. John happily complied, thus blessing his enemy. He tried to strike up a conversation with John, too, asking him if he had ever eaten venison and what it tasted like. John replied that he had, and that its flavor was good albeit sharper than beef, but much less so than bear meat, and not as good or lean as elk or moose. That reply pretty much blew Moroni's limited circuitry and he ended the chat by saying he had a friend who hunted and ate deer. He thus wanted to know how it tasted. Since John was not a big soccer fan, he had to hand it to Sergio and Moroni for mustering the courage to try to speak about food (or over it) with John, since those two had little else to talk about and few life experiences. Of course, they were little different than other *machucados*.

Speaking of food, Miami, Rubén, Ismael, and John once again enjoyed lunch together, compliments to Pamela, even if she was unable to grasp the importance of adding multivitamins to a diet poor in vegetables. During lunch, Miami taught John some interesting things, like how the sphincter fails after nine hours of floating in seawater under 10°C, causing death as water rises in the body through the anus. He also talked about double-chambered crotches in full-body wetsuits that allow sailors to urinate during long stints in near-arctic Chilean waters. Albeit intriguing, John still found economics and public policy more interesting, however, and Miami remarked that he was quite captivated by the simple economic fact that prisoners who arrive with nothing always tend to accumulate goods that alleviate their uneasiness, ending up with many things prior to leaving prison. Private property is inextricably linked with human life and liberty; without it civilization ends. He then carried the bulk of the last *rancho*, which hardly anyone ate, and set it on the edge of the *pesebre*. At first, Miami did not like the term *pesebre*, but it later grew on him, as he could imagine two cows or horses eating out of it side by side. The contents were dumped into the adjacent trashcan so Miami could wash the pot. He repeated this process the next and most days in 118. Prison provides a microcosm of government waste under socialism.

Ismael had asked John for his plastic water bottle when he was done with it, leading John to remark about how odd it is that prisoners find use for things that people outside would consider trash. Can you imagine a serious dinner table conversation about the utility of used plastic bottles? Ismael, mainly, and Rubén, then rattled off ten important uses for them in prison: (1) using them to enhance the smoking of marijuana (*diablito*), especially if *chicha* liquor is put in

the bottle and a hole for a joint is bored in the side, allowing the sucked out smoke to pass over then elixir and produce and enhanced high; (2) the cap can be modified and used as a tiny pot pipe; (3) once cut in half, the bottle can be used to pour liquid from one container to another; (4) the bottle itself can be used to make *chicha*; (5) its shards can be used to cut cloth; (6) filled with cement, sand, or water, such bottles serve as weights to work out with; (7) one can bind three or four of them together and make a bedside shelf for his cell; (8) they serve as pots for plants; (9) once filled, a *reo* can throw hot water on a homosexual or other undesirable person; (10) once opened up, spread out, and tied on, the bottle serves as an abdominal shield that mitigates stab wounds. Hence, one's life is saved even if he ends up hurt during some battle. Ismael showed a couple of his battle scars on his right arm—from his warrior days in Antofagasta penitentiary—wherein (after some time and reflection) the *reos* recognized that voluntarily recycling plastic bottles was probably best for everyone, and did so. Once again, John was amazed by all the interesting things he had learned in prison. He was also glad that his cellmate Alexis would be unlikely to misuse empty plastic bottles to his detriment.

Bottled drinks and food were in abundance the next day in 118 as *encomienda* bags arrived. Alexis got some things in, too, including avocados and chocolate-bathed wafers. John was not used to his cellmate bringing things in, but it was clear that Alexis had no plans to be a leech like Manuel, Mauricio, Sergio, and (to a much lesser extent) Delfín. Of course, John could care less if they were leeches or not. He had abundance from Pamela and his supporters and thus was happy to give to others based on Galatians 6:9-10, “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those of the household of faith.” Being generous was part of doing “good to all,” in John’s mind. Another principle he followed was found in Ecclesiastes 11:1-2, “Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days. Give a serving to seven, and also to eight, for you do not know what evil will be upon the earth.” This latter principle was found true in John’s life in 118, not just with the returned kindness of his cellmate Alexis, but also with that of Leopoldo, Miami, Ismael (now and then, like a cereal bar today and a free haircut a couple weeks ago), and Marcelo—who brought John two lemons and two peaches yesterday, plus a couple large chunks of honeydew melon, a couple runny yogurts, an apple, and another peach today. Alexis gave him a package of salted crackers and John gave him a handful of celery (which was scarce in prison). Even Michael and Sergio from 118B shared their milky-cookie cake creation or a few bites of fried cheese *empanada* once in a while, and Rubén gave some bits of food here and there and also brought down ketchup, mayonnaise, *ají* (Chilean hot sauce) to their Friday meals, as well as letting people use his pressed sandwich cooker. John ungrudgingly gave to all these *reos* and more, including poorer *reos* and just about anyone who asked him for something—even *pacos* Penailillo, Cisternas, and Castro. He taught or corrected English for Necúlman and *Comandante* Toledo, too. While he demanded or expected nothing in return, he also believed that blessings would come from being kind and generous. As Proverbs 11:25 states, “The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself.”

Saturdays had become a favorite day of Rubén, Miami, and Ismael—among others—because John invariably would share a few slices of pizza with them. Even a little chunk was a luxury, which was scarce in prison and only arrived via *encomienda* or by paying a *paco*. People appreciated, too, that it cost nearly 2,000 pesos (USD 3) a slice, signifying (by prison standards) a considerable contribution from John to their favor. Cristián, Michael, and Luchito all got bites

of pizza via Miami. Again, John asked for nothing in return, although he appreciated Miami reheating things and Ismael washing the dishes afterwards. He did comment with a smile to Miami privately, however, “You guys are spoiled (*regalones*).” Miami replied, “No, but you, John, are spoiled the most; you are like the nucleus of the atom around here and all of us are the electrons circling you.” John just chuckled. Furthermore, several of the hungrier *machucados* acted more like barn animals, as noted earlier, and Sergio (from 118B)’s affection was almost dog-like. Ismael, too, reminded John of a seal in captivity catching fish tossed to it, whenever he tossed him a *frugalé* sour citrus gummy candy—which he loved. When he ate some food from John that he found delicious, Ismael would close his eyes, raise his chin, kiss his fingertips (propelling them slowly from his face), and say, “*un manjar*” (a delicacy) or another Chilean synonym like “*eclesiástico*” (which is a substitute for *un bocatto di cardinale*—a phrase imported from Italian that Ismael could apparently never remember). Miami used other synonyms like *un buffet* or *un gourmet* when describing the good food John brought or made, although he also employed such terminology sarcastically when describing the prison-issued breakfast food he handed out, or to disdainfully describe some of his favorite *rancho* dishes, like chicken soup and lentils. Note that Aaron used to get a good bit of John’s food largesse, but he was never around anymore, preferring the company of the sycophants inside 118’s building. John reflected on the fact that the current cast of characters in 118’s *patio* seemed to be far more appreciative than when Karim, Arturo, *Che*, and Manuel were around, all of whom generated a more toxic environment. Even adding the generosity of Raúl (the elder) during that era did not offset that complicated attitude, nor did it counter the malignant contagion that seemed to emanate from certain extroverted characters now thankfully housed elsewhere.

Empty-handed Necúlman likewise reappeared in 118, obtaining permission from Cisternas to take John with him back to 109 where he was in charge that day. “It’s easier for me to bring you here to teach me English during the morning than it is for me to head over to 118 in the afternoon,” he said as he sat at his desk. For whatever reason, however, it was not easy for him to bring John the groceries he promised. Slave John had now racked up ten unpaid hours. Nevertheless, John’s light and happy conversation up and back during the knee-bothering kilometer walk, and the warm greetings from 109’s *mozos* who remembered him from during quarantine last winter, stirred up lots of bad memories for John. He was especially mindful of Castro forcing him to march off to the gulag with his burden, while he was running a fever—sick with Covid-19 and pneumonia. He had almost died there, after all, and there he met and briefly lived with the unforgettable Rufo. John had not been back to 109 since that time, and the *módulo* was no longer used for quarantine. That burden was now placed upon 108, where newcomers were received. But John was happy to leave it again all the same.

Between serving Necúlman ’s convenience and putting away his goodies that came in *encomienda*, John did not manage to get much reading done on the *patio* and only got to sit in the sun for ten minutes—although he did make quick work of Rubén in three games of chess. He was also quite pleased with himself for smashing two flies with a single blow. He had mastered the art of hovering his hand over his prey on the table, slowly lowering it before launching his final kill thrust. He reflected, too, that if such were done at home in Reñaca he would have rushed to wash his hand of the remnants, but now he was content to let them putrefy until his next trip to the *pesebre*. Had 118 caused his cleanliness standards to change?

One thing that never seemed to change was the lack of care given to prisoners. Alexis went to get

John some anti-inflammatory medicine to help his knee, but the penitentiary's pharmacy was all out, and the *pacos* refused to let Pamela toss some Ibuprofen in one of John's *encomienda* sacks. Like with his deteriorating vision, John just had to live with the knee pain. No one who could do something cared. Other *reos* were also suffering. Miami reported to John several bits of sad news. Several of the *machucados* in 118B, including Sergio and Michael, had been denied their automatic upgrade from Sundays-home leave to weekendshome leave that normally happened after three months. The Covid-19 quarantine had messed up the schedule and none of them had been able to leave prison on Sunday for many weeks. Moreover, Moroni's request to be moved to the jail in Los Andes had been ignored, at least so far, resulting in more suffering and hassle when getting his kidney dialysis treatments every other day. Guillermo was languishing in 111 awaiting the other shoe to drop and a likely second three-year sentence for yet another contempt of court conviction. What could be said? Prison was an evil place for some, and terrestrial hell for the rest. The judicial system itself is principally a satanic henchman.

"Castro has more seniority than Cisternas; he's going to be permanently placed in charge of 118," said Miami to a nonplussed John. "He left instructions for *Cabo Morada* who's in charge of 118 today, and that's why so many *reos* are changing cells." Sure enough, Helmut and Mauricio had moved over to 118B since they had entered into the *dominical* program. Elwin (Mauricio's other recent cellmate along with Alexis) had gone off to live with Marino and Ricardo, and Ismael and Cristián had moved into cell 10, John's former cell assignment with Mauricio. The *patio* was positively boring during all the moving around, just the way John liked it. Santiago (especially) and the Valparaíso/Viña del Mar areas had received an almost unheard of amount of Summer rainfall during this last weekend of January—perhaps 100mm and 40mm respectively—and the showers continued that Sunday morning as John quietly read alone in the dining hall. Miami popped in from time to time when he was not scrambling to deal with his laundry service, otherwise John was undisturbed. Then the sun came out in all its midsummer fury, and John moved his plastic chair outside to read in the sunshine and swat pesky flies. Several *reos* passed by who were moving from one cell to another, or from 118 to 118B. Helmut commented, "John, do you know that there is a bill in Congress now that is likely to become law (*ley indulto*), which will pardon all leftist protesters who committed crimes in 2019 and 2020? And that you and a number of other rightists (mainly *carabineros*) or Libertarians, in order to make the legislation equitable, will be covered by the benefit?" John affirmed that he knew and was hoping it was true—although he was not thrilled by the thought of so many radical leftists and criminals getting off Scot-free. Alexis had acquired the onions and tomatoes John needed to make *guacamole*, which he did as soon as he finished preaching during the Historic Baptists Zoomcast. Alexis enjoyed it immensely and so would several others in their morning burritos.

Chapter XIV One is Hungry and Another Is Drunk [Drugged]

The first day of February 2021 was beautiful in central Chile, except in prison—where all days, months, and seasons run together behind tall walls. Imagine floating in the South Pacific, midway between New Zealand and Chile, on a small naval helicopter carrier. As the months pass, one becomes almost oblivious to the change in weather and gets used to the confined space. There is nowhere to go and nothing to do other than go out on the deck for a while. Every now and then, a transport brings some friend or family member to see a fortunate intern or conscript, and food and supplies come regularly to keep the floating island going. That is pretty much what prison is like. The confined space might as well be in the middle of the ocean. It makes little difference to the *reos*—other than the need for the detention center to be close to loved ones so they can physically get there without major expense. One must learn to bide his time, and visitors must learn to adjust their relationship parameters. John read a lot of books, “redeeming the time” (Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5) as best he could. In fact, he was on his 25th book since being taken captive by Satan’s henchmen. And his reading supply-line was serious business. During the last visitation, he had broken the rules, holding one book under each armpit (inside his jacket) as he walked, and had given them to Pamela at the visitation table without a hitch. He was not being rebellious. He just had to find a way to return the books she brought in through *encomienda*—ridiculous *gendarme* rules notwithstanding—to avoid the accumulated weight in case he had to change cells.

Most *reos* in 118 who did not read books (besides, perhaps the Bible), which was everyone other than John, Miami, Guillermo, Ismael, and occasionally Carlos, Ricardo, and Sergio, were fascinated and sometimes puzzled by those who did. Rubén asked John, “How can you read so much?” John replied that he was used to it, especially after reading stacks of articles and books during graduate school. Reading was the principal way that he received information, as opposed to the *reos*—and perhaps most people in society generally—who got theirs by listening to others, watching television or movies, and getting notifications at work. This fact was manifest in their reactions when they heard John chuckle at his book while they watched him read. John remembered being so intrigued when he was around seven years old, watching his mother enjoy a book. Eventually, he grew interested in books himself and began to read—although he did not become an avid reader until college. It dawned on John that the *reos* had reacted in such a way because they had never read a book—or at least not many. Yet, like little boys, they really wanted to know what the story was about and what made John laugh so much. John told them, and they could not wait to hear more. If the book were not in English, some of them might have even gotten curious enough to pick it up and read it. John then realized that not only was he floating in the “South Pacific,” he was largely cohabitating with men who were little more sophisticated than the occasional dolphins, whales, or porpoises that might pass by. Those men were not only in prison physically; their minds had likewise been fettered. Strolling the “heliport” with John, Miami noted, these *reos* only know how to regurgitate or parrot information they receive. Few, if any, ever go to the next level of analysis and critical thinking, much less to the ensuing level of being creative and generating a novel thought or something new. John marveled at how closed, mysterious, and maybe even scary the world must be for benighted men with such limitations, and he was thankful that he had escaped such a plight—recalling from Colossians 1:13 that God has “delivered us from the power of darkness.”

Miami also directed John to watch chapters 5 and 6 of season 4 of *Vis a Vis*, a Spanish television series. He said that Spain features the same unjust judicial and penal system that Chile has, lined with perverse incentives, revolving doors, waste, and corruption—despite the superior infrastructure in Spain. It was easy to keep captive the nearly mindless class of *reos* and *machucados* living by instinct, impulse, and who almost blindly followed orders while confined on the somewhat fascist “high seas.” And certainly something like 99% of them fell into this hapless, beleaguered class. This situation was manifest when Sergio came in with a draft *escrito* for all “core” 118 *reos* to sign eventually, initiating collective action to help them preserve parole benefits from being taken. John, Miami, Rubén, and Ismael were willing to go along, but only John and Miami saw the unprincipled futility involved in calling in a prison psychologist and convincing her that they needed to be paroled by means of confessing to crimes they never committed. The rest of the *reos* were just like the metal ball bouncing rapidly between the bumpers in an old pinball game before eventually dropping into the hole. They possessed about the same level of collective power over the evil, arbitrary, and capricious penal system as a group of cows did over a dairy farmer. Later on, John was reading his book when heard a coin from the poker table hit the floor and roll toward the doorway. The mystified players, Sergio (from 118B) in particular, searched in vain to find it until one of them finally moved the little table next to the door (three meters from the poker table) and found it. So much energy and manpower spent on recuperating such a trifling sum! Only in a prison economy with hapless participants would such an otherwise wasteful quest to recover seven American cents make sense.

Nonetheless, basic sensibilities often prevailed. One thing that all the *reos* and *machucados* could understand and appreciate was good food. At breakfast, John had shared with the gang some nacho-cheese-flavored chips and warm *quesadilla* fragments topped with the *guacamole* he made the night before. At lunchtime, he filled celery sticks with peanut butter before their watching eyes, while their mouth watered as Miami heated the four chicken-beefcheeseguacamole burritos he prepared the night before. Once again, the cuisine was a hit. They marveled, too, as John ate a Caesar salad with peeled, sliced apples, celery, lettuce, and cheese. Such mixtures were rare in Chile, but—given John’s track record—they believed him when he told them it was delicious. Parrots, like dolphins and porpoises, are content to follow along or be captive so long as they are well fed. “Why were Chilean prisoners any different?,” wondered John. Sometimes, he felt little different than other prisoners in this respect. Surprisingly, Necúlman did not take advantage of “teacher” John’s servitude, even though he was in charge of 118 that day. John did not bother to ask why, even after Necúlman had indicated that he would be having class as John walked by him in the morning out onto the *patio*. Perhaps the friendly *paco* had been called away on some urgent business. John had little incentive to teach Necúlman since he brought no food. Did the dolphins at Sea World jump and dance without reward? He would rather read than work for nothing. After all, John was smarter than the average porpoise. Indeed, he was eyeing the “heliport” and imagining how he might arrange transportation off the little floating island where he was captive. He solaced himself in his mind using his imagination.

However, not everyone appreciated John’s way of thinking. “You need to always bring your mask down to the *patio* with you,” barked Castro at John the next day. He had called all the *reos* to line up and sign for their receipt of the same paper that Sergio had shown the “core” 118 members the day before: “New Process for Qualifying for Good Conduct” (for benefits and parole). The female desk-jockey from *gendarme* central waited for the *reos*, along with her

registry to sign and stack of photocopied brochures. Overhearing Castro's barking, Cristián ran into the dining hall and retrieved a spare mask he had, lending it to John. "It's good to have people looking out for me," mused John. After a short wait, John filled in his name and, instead of a signature, handwrote in English, "Refused to sign." Why not? Even if convicted, he planned to get transferred as fast as possible to an Italian jail. And he sure was not going to confess to crimes he did not commit to some *gendarme* social worker or psychologist in order to qualify for benefits. Neither was Miami. Yet, despite their sentiment, at the same time, other prison employees were putting on their chemical-filled, gaspowered backpacks, soon to fumigate 118A for bedbugs and other critters. There's never a dull day in terrestrial hell.

John later commented to the gang in the dining hall that he had read some scientists who said that the masks designed to combat Covid-19 probably did more harm than good. Exhaling gets rid of toxins just like urinating and defecating do. Putting a mask on merely compels a man to inhale the same toxins again. Hence, "wearing one makes little sense," he said, "except of course in Castro's case since the world would be a better place without him." That quip received a rousing chuckle. There were no Castro fans in the room; all had some beef with him. Speaking of beefs, over in 111, Guillermo later that afternoon reported that he was once again being threatened at knifepoint in his cell for not buying or consuming drugs. He needed to get out of there as soon as possible. John could not offer much in the way of helpful comments and directed the poor soul to Miami. Just how was Guillermo going to last the next three to five years in that environment? He needed to get out of that cell fast, and change *módulos* if possible.

Before returning to their cells, John had a chance to talk with Miami, Rubén, Ismael, and Moroni about the economics of the situation in prison. Even Michael hung around to listen for a little while, although listening was not his strong suit. (It was hard for him to stay quiet for more than forty-five seconds.) "Listen," John said, "The top *gendarme* officers all make over four million pesos per month and their rule here is remarkably similar to a plantation owner governing his slaves. The slaves produce the master's wealth and justify his high salary. In the Nineteenth Century, they cultivated cotton and other crops for the master. Nowadays, merely being confined generates a transfer payment from taxpayers to the *gendarmería*. Revenue and profit are a function of the number of enrolled prisoners. Hence, the modern 'masters' have an incentive to keep their 'slaves' alive enough to generate the desired revenue, making sure that the revolving door policy keeps the net inflow of body count (and revenues) at optimal levels. Those *pacos* among the lower ranks, who earn 75% to 90% less than *gendarme* officers do for most of their thirty-year careers, also treated the *reos* as a business opportunity. They could earn three to twenty times their base salary by selling drugs, liquor, cellphones, SD cards and thumb drives, cell-life or occupancy privileges, food, creature comforts, small kitchen and personal grooming appliances, vitamins and medicines, and financial services to them."

John continued, "Think about the dairy and meat (cattle) markets and consider the parallels with prisonerbased revenue generation. Nothing but the eyeballs go to waste from a slaughtered animal, which may include cows, pigs, buffalo, bison, goats, and sheep in a well-diversified operation, in the same way that a prison has prisoners with different attributes, backgrounds, and capacities. While some animals are kept around longer to be milked, and others selected for their genetic characteristics to reproduce and enlarge the herd, those that are slaughtered are used optimally. The meat is the main product, but all the rest is used, too, even if adding relatively small amounts to overall revenues. The skin is taken and tanned for leather, the bones are

crushed to make china, the innards are transformed into pet food, etc. Similarly, the *reos* are a source of various additional revenue streams for (especially but not exclusively) the rank-and-file *gendarmes* and perhaps lower-ranking officers—above and beyond their base salaries paid by taxpayers. Like cattle meat, drug sales comprise the lion’s share of extra income for all but a relatively small “honest” minority of such *gendarmes*. The temptation to profit from such illicit activity is too great for low-income earners. Few, like Silva, rise above the temptation to profit based on ethical principles. The majority succumb to the call of their unsatisfied needs, making whatever excuses necessary to justify their actions.”

He then added some deeper theory to his talk. “And there is evidence of this behavior. Does anyone ever question how people with such mediocre salaries can afford to drive such nice vehicles or live in the upscale parts of town? Apparently not, but the answer should be obvious: they make lots of money on the side. Moreover, the *pacos* famously blame the entrance of the prison’s drug supply on the home-baked goods, home-prepared foods, vaginas, and anuses of visitors. Yet this claim is belied by the fact that the supply of drugs in Valparaíso penitentiary has not changed, nor has the price of drugs risen, relative to their street price, during the ten months starting in April 2020—when visitation was halted or severely curtailed. Economic theory shows that when the demand for drugs is unchanged—and especially if it increases during a stressful time when friends and loved ones are not seen—the price of drugs will rise if the supply of drugs goes down. The stability of drug prices provides evidence that the supply of drugs has remained unchanged (or even increased somewhat to meet the needs of stressed-out *machucados*). Without visitors, the only way that illegal drugs can get into the prison are by means of the *gendarmes*, along with the relatively few social workers, psychologists, and infirmary staff. There is also a possibility—and no serious economist could summarily dismiss it—that some *gendarmes* are complicit with external food and goods suppliers who might be sneaking drugs to the prison by mixing them in with their deliveries, albeit no *reo* has ever mentioned this scenario as really happening.”

John went on, “The sales of other aforementioned items to the *reos* pale by comparison to drugs but they still add to overall profits. It would make no more sense to leave this money on the table than it would for slaughterhouses to throw out the skin, innards, and bones of cattle. There is no good reason to throw out saleable merchandise. Accordingly, the need for cash to purchase such goods is the real reason why the *gendarmes* limit, control, and monitor the supply of money entering the prison. The *reos* need cash to buy things from the *gendarmes* directly or from the *gendarme*-controlled kiosks. All other money comes in through *pacos* or prison employees, most of whom charge a fee of 10% to 20% of the total amount brought in. Letting money enter freely would eliminate this profit center and allow wealthier *reos* to gain too much internal power, even to the point of ‘buying’ and ‘owning’ some *pacos* themselves—and the revenues they generate. All activity has to be tightly controlled to optimize benefits for the *gendarmes*, and the *pacos* tend to stick together. Furthermore, *reos* performing quasi-slave duties enhance the economic satisfaction of the *gendarmes*. Like with select animals on farms that perform preferential or specialized duties, chefs, office and grounds cleaners, laborers, and other servants make the *pacos’* duties lighter.” Miami underscored and clarified the Spanish of John’s mini-lecture for those who had no post-secondary education, and the *reos* on hand were fascinated by the economic logic and were left convinced by the compelling evidence that they themselves had witnessed during their incarcerations.

The price of drugs had remained constant over the past year, usually being sold in little envelopes with price tags of 5,000, 10,000, or 20,000 pesos. However, the quantity in each makeshift envelope and/or the quality could change—and in fact had changed—hence causing a variation in the market price per gram. The variation was due to a number of factors, including the street price rising by nearly 20% during the Coronavirus pandemic, added security checks entering the penitentiary that increased the risk and difficulty of bringing them in (if caught—a *gendarme* could lose his job and spend five or more years in jail), and the substitution of the commission-less drugs brought in during visitation for more of those brought in by *pacos* earning a commission, had the net effect of increasing the overall average per-gram price slightly. The street price for a gram of marijuana, according to Cristián, had risen from 5,000 pesos to 6,000 pesos, while cocaine's price had held steady but its quality had fallen. Crack and Ecstasy had not gone up in price. In jail, the quantity of marijuana in an envelope had fallen from one gram to 0.7 or 0.8 grams, he said. Guillermo said there had been a reduction in either quantity (to 0.5 to 0.6 grams) or quality in *módulo* 111, more than Cristián's estimate. He also said that envelopes of Rizzo sold for 40,000 pesos and that many traffickers preferred that funds be transferred to their external accounts rather than paid in cash, perhaps so that they could facilitate transfers to *pacos* or other suppliers. Sergio (from 118B), who was arguably much closer to the situation (being a *machucado*), said that he had seen *no* change whatsoever en either price or quantity in *módulos* 114 and 103; 10,000 pesos bought one gram of marijuana, 1.5 grams of crack, or three pills.

Ismael added that the price always depended on quality. In Antofagasta, where the prison was much further from the city, prices were generally higher than in Valparaíso, and he thought the quantity provided had dropped by as much as one-half in oft-quarantined Antofagasta. The price effectively went up when, he remarked, homosexual anal deliveries were forestalled in favor of commissioned ones that had become more costly with increased risk for the *gendarme cochino* (dirty guard). He said that crack was cheapest and thus accounted for 70% of all drugs consumed, and further noted that all pills were not the same and their price was congruent with the effect they produced. Moreover, it must be underscored that markups were very high in Antofagasta penitentiary, so much so that a “friend” of the dealer could regularly get double or triple the quantity for the same price. Rubén, Ismael, and Sergio noted that drug prices also tended to rise when the *pacos* and other employees accounted for the lion's share of the prison supply (with food deliverers and dirty lawyers making up a relatively small percentage) because they used middlemen, who also got a cut. As noted in Chapter III of the first volume of this book, Roberto said that, pre-quarantine, 12,000 pesos bought three marijuana joints (congruent with current prices), six doses of cocaine (which seemed similarly priced), eight doses of various kinds of pills (which seemed to be half the price, assuming quality was the same), or twelve hits of crack (which, according to Cristián, now sold at half the price—likely indicating increased rather than decreased supply).

In the final analysis, it is remarkable that the price per unit of illegal drugs in Valparaíso penitentiary showed little or no change, despite all the foregoing factors that should have caused a significant rise. Perhaps less money was coming in and thus the traffickers had to lower their prices charged despite street price rises. Or maybe the demand for drugs had risen—and business was so lucrative—during stressful quarantine times, that the supply of drugs actually increased to meet demand despite the added risks that the *pacos* faced. Whatever contribution visitors made to overall supply was evidently small compared to the amount brought in by *pacos* or workers. Ismael recalled contraband cigarettes coming in sitting on the passenger' seat of a

delivery truck, or tucked into the middle of a mound of bread. He was sure that significant quantities of drugs could enter the same way if the business was well-coordinated. While the *gendarmes* like to promote a public image of doing their part to “punish” prisoners harder by restricting the amount of weekly spending money they could bring in, and stomping out drugs and traffickers, the almost undeniable fact is that both the illicit drug and financing markets are controlled by a good chunk of the *gendarmes* themselves. The claim that visitors are largely responsible for the great majority of *machucados* using drugs simply did not hold water. Moreover, any actual per-unit price rises, if any, could be explained by changes in the street price or higher commissions rather than a drop in supply.

Speaking of not holding water, Rubén complained that his “smart” (contraband) television didn’t either. The fumigators destroyed it the day before by spraying his cell and furniture, inundating it and shorting out the apparatus in the process. (Of course, the *pacos* would not pay for the damage.) Sad, he vowed to start reading more. John thought that a reading “high” should beat a drug one any day. To avoid raising Cisternas’ ire, ever-sensitive Miami did a deep cleaning and perfuming of the *patio* bathroom and shower stalls (unbeknownst to John) so that John could continue his important interviews and work. At least he, unlike the *pacos*, could see the folly of misallocating human resources.

At noon the following day, Cisternas finally called John into his office to begin his English lessons. Although nothing was said about how John might benefit from the arrangement, he happily complied as any good slave would. Cisternas’ level of English was very basic; he knew what a “door” and a “window” were in the office but nothing more. He wanted to immigrate to the United States with his family, however, and that motivated him to study English. It would be a long, tough row to hoe for 31-year-old Geraldo. But the process got underway. John whipped up some simple sentences, a dozen vocabulary words, and the present, past, imperfect, and pluperfect declensions of the verbs to be and to have, plus threw out some little words to practice the short *i* and *th* sounds. As the ironic scene continued, with a slave teaching his master, Gerald dutifully copied things down in his notebook and the hour-long class was off and running. John hoped at least that Necúlman would not arrive to have his free lessons the same day—and he did not. An hour a day was enough. While the brownie points were good, it would be nice to have something concrete instead of being relegated to a position lower than even a poorly paid *ranchero*. Otherwise, John would just as soon read his novel or play chess.

After all, the woodworkers and some others were trading their time for money instead of doing slave labor. For instance, Cristián had now ensconced into the barber room during the day after someone gave him a wall charger for 118’s previously unknown tattoo machine. The young man was drawing on people’s arms, legs, and torsos in no time. Indeed, he was now earning money to send home to his almost-wife and infant son as the *machucados* were lining up to disfigure their bodies—or at least permanently stain their skin—with purple ink. Yet, so far, John’s business was to be a payer not a payee. For example, in order to make the cell more comfortable for him and Alexis, he hired Carlos to put up a couple more shelves above the foot of his bunk. For all the cost, at least John had peace with everyone for all he paid out and his friends and family had peace of mind that he was well—despite the fact that Miami and others were worried when John was gone for so long after Cisternas called him in.

John’s British friend Matt (an underwater welder working in Chilean ports) had suggested he

watch “Inside the World’s Toughest Prisons” on Netflix, which he was doing (one per night). After finishing season 5, John could say that 118 was better than hellholes in Honduras, Mexico, Brazil, the Philippines, South Africa, Costa Rica, Paraguay, Lesotho and New Guinea (especially), and even Poland—although 109 was not much better than a few on that list—and it was a little behind Ukraine, Rumania, Mauritius, and Belize in some respects. It was surely way behind what amounted to hotel-like living in Germany—and Norway, Greenland, and Denmark in particular. Maybe Matt was trying to help John feel better by convincing him that other men suffered more than he did, especially in terms of food quality and sleeping arrangements. Or maybe he wanted to confirm John’s plan B to be transferred to an Italian jail instead, with more humane European standards. One thing the documentaries taught John was that the level of violence was higher in Valparaíso penitentiary than most of the places under consideration, and that 118 was a relatively privileged place. He also found the conjugal visit system in each place (if they had one at all) to be quite curious—Ukraine, Honduras, Paraguay, and Brazil in particular—compared to Chile.

Alexis appreciated what John did for him and said that if he got out soon (April) he would happily bring the *encomienda* bags to John on Saturday so that Pamela would not have to. (Alexis worked as an Uber driver outside.) People in the dining hall also had—more than ever—started treating John like a sage, often hanging on every word, and listening intently to what he had to say. Even Sergio moved outside with his cigarette when John suggested it was rude of him to smoke in a room where everyone else was a nonsmoker. Too, Michael listened to John for a little bit, although he could not help bursting out at one point—running off at the mouth again—ignorantly rendering his opinions about American culture. He said that that country was full of crazy people who shoot kids in schools, even though he had never been to the United States or even known or consulted with any Americans. He certainly had little use for John’s perspective. The too-skinny babbler was quintessentially Chilean in that sense; he never lacked an opinion about any topic and almost always avoided opportunities to learn something new and improve his warped and arrogant opinions.

The typical Chilean never lets things like facts or solid theory undermine a good, well-developed opinion. In some sense, sadly, one could argue that Chile is a nation full of fools like Michael—at least by biblical standards. As John recalled, “Every prudent man acts with knowledge, but a fool lays open his folly” and “A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart” (Proverbs 13:16; 18:2). The Apostle Paul referred to such people as “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7). Meanwhile, those few Chileans like quiet, humble Guillermo—living among fools—had been moved out of his horrid cell in 111 to even worse circumstances. He shared his new cell with eight *machucados* and had to throw his mattress down on the damp, filthy floor to sleep. Rats would sniff him and lick or nibble at his head at night, and bugs would get into his hair. He said his first night was terrible. John was horrified by what was happening to his former cellmate, but there was nothing that he, Miami, or anyone in 118 could do.

Chapter XV Pulling them Out of the Fire

As it turned out, 118 had its own tremendous trouble. A fire broke out in one-legged Jorge's cell in 118A just as John and Valentín were getting ready to start their Historic Baptists Zoomcast on Thursday at 10:00 p.m., February 4, 2021. The first forty minutes of the program turned into John giving live commentary from the scene as he heard loud cries for help, massive door-banging from trapped prisoners, and billows of smoke pouring out the recently opened first floor door. Miami was the hero of the night, opening that door and then crouching in the dark under the smoke overhead to open the padlocks on each of the five cell doors, throwing the bolts open. He had told Luchito to cut the power to the building to ensure any ongoing fire source was cut. He then pulled asphyxiated Jorge out from the last room, dragging the man down ten meters of hallway then laying him out on the *patio*, before returning to get the other three invalids out. (Unknown to Miami, Moroni, a fifth invalid, had just returned from dialysis and thus was not in his cell—provoking great worry until *chuncoco* yelled out from his thirdstory window: "thirteen upstairs, four below, and Moroni in the hospital.") The loudest yelping and banging came from Sergio, Michael, and others housed in the cell directly above Jorge as smoke poured in through their window. While flightengineer Miami was used to taking action through his emergency training, his cellmate Luchito was a bundle of nerves, fumbling with the keys in the smoke and darkness, only managing to get two of the five second-floor doors open before Miami arrived to open two more. The night-duty *paco* finally arrived to open Sergio and Michael's.

A number of men would have likely been dead had they had to await the arrival of the slow-moving *paco*. It was purely the Providence of God that Miami and Luchito's cell door had been left open in 118. Luchito (who was a quasislave working in the officer's administrative section) had been working late dismantling and washing the dust off the *gendarmería*'s computer equipment. The night duty *paco* had made his rounds early—before Luchito had returned—and thus left Miami's cell door unlocked. While technically against *gendarme* procedure, the glitch probably ended up saving the lives of several *reos*. In the ensuing chaos, it became clear that Miami alone was prepared to act in an emergency, while the *pacos* simply did not know what to do. Emergency training and drills never occurred in the Valparaíso penitentiary. As it was, Miami, Luchito, some *pacos*, and the freed *machucados* got a hose out and doused the flames with water long before the five external firefighters finally arrived. Sergio (*Chuncoco*) was a trained firefighter himself but, like the rest of the *reos* in 118, was locked in his cell and could do nothing more than gawk from his barred window overlooking the chaotic scene out on the *patio*. The incident was another case where markets (private action) worked while government failed.

Some of the arriving *pacos* feared that some *reos* had done this to try to escape, with one *paco* scolding another for not making the prisoners line up and count off. Jorge might have set the fire intentionally in order to get out. He had his backpack on when Miami found him, and the sink water was left running as if at the last minute things got out of hand and he was undertaking measures to save his life. Jorge had made a scene several nights before. It was hard for the gunman to live alone, even with his amusing laughter marking his phone calls to his girlfriend every night. He might have just flipped out. Rubén remarked that he was a hardened criminal and a drug addict, but that drugs were hard to come by in 118 and, therefore, Jorge was trying to get moved back among his kind in one of the general population *módulos*. John observed one of two partially burnt mattresses laying on the *patio* the next morning. Carlos had pulled out some

wiring and a melted socket with partially bare wires attached to the base of an electric tea kettle and a rubber-soled shoe fused to it. Maybe Jorge fell asleep atop the shoe and kettle base and the fire was an accident, but most people—including the two *gendarme* junior officers John spoke to in Jorge's blackened cell after all the contents had been removed—believed that it was intentional. The fact that he allowed his crutches to burn led some to conclude that he might have been attempting suicide.

At any rate, the report on late night news claiming the men in 118A were trying to escape was ridiculous. Thirteen of them were *dominicale*s due to be fully paroled in a few months. Why would they try to escape and lose that benefit? The other five could hardly walk, much less scale a wall and escape. Other than Miami and Luchito, all the *reos* in 118 were locked in their cells. Yet the *pacos* promoted the line that an attempted escape plan was foiled by the arrival of the dutiful and brave *gendarme* night guards. No mention was made in the news of the night's true hero, working on his knees in the dark, smoky passage, or pill-loving Jorge's possible selfish and reckless rationale. In reality, the feckless *pacos* had no plan, nor did they know what to do in case of an emergency, nor did they "save the day."

John watched anxiously as the 118A *reos* lined up to enter 118 for the night, noticing especially Mauricio's baldness sticking out, along with Daniel and Delfín. Even if receiving one of the men would qualify as being a good work, there was no joy in the thought of having a *machucado* sprawled on the cell floor that night. John and Alexis' cell had no third bunk where one of the refugees might sleep. Sergio (*Chuncoco*) and the other *mozos* (by then out of their cells and helping) knew that fact and did not lodge one with them, nor did one go with José and Angelino next door. Jorge stayed with Marino on the top floor in cell number 17—a fact which was hardly a comfort to the occupants of 118 who feared the self-centered fool might start another fire. The *pacos* and Helmut (looking for a lighter) came pounding on John and Alexis' door during Valentín's teaching (Alexis already having fallen asleep), and there was some anger expressed at first because of John's delay in pulling back the curtain in order to peer out the square hole in the door. But all was well once they saw it was the *gringo*, who told them that there were two *reos* in the cell. (John's microphone was muted so the Historic Baptist attendees had no idea what was going on.) John was also concerned that electric appliances like his little oven would be confiscated as a result of the fiasco and hid it in the shower stall under some laundry. But nothing came of the potential threat.

The next morning, Castro —now overtly claiming to head 118—peered into the cell and asked why John was living alone. John replied, "Ranchero Alexis lives with me and left a couple hours ago, at 6:30 a.m." Castro, a little befuddled, regrouped and pointed out the fact that there was no third bunk, saying that one would have to be put up. He just had to find something to hassle John about. Down on the *patio* and braving the drizzle, the still bewildered men gathered and compared notes about the night's events. Then Castro called everyone into circular formation in the dining hall, where they numbered off. He then tried to act a bit like General Patton and warmly talk with "his men" about Jorge's stupidity (for the second time) and that he knew that everyone had cell phones. He would not mind if men called to tell their loved ones what was happening in case of an emergency, and would prefer to get a call himself in such cases. Everyone stood at attention but no one could take him seriously. Certainly no *reo* was about to call Castro directly from his cell—even if he claimed he would not confiscate it.

Castro then ordered all men to work on cleaning up 118A after breakfast. Most of the men—like one would expect from people in the Navy—started the heavier cleanup task immediately. John, Rubén, Delfín, and Daniel ate breakfast in the dining hall, where once again the *reos* were given apples small enough to fit in one’s semi-closed palm—unsuitable for export but useful only to make juice or to feed to livestock and prisoners. After delivering breakfast, Miami washed the smoky clothes of some invalids in the *pesebre* in order that they might have something to wear. The water depth had risen to around ten centimeters in the downstairs part of 118A, and lots of stuff was ruined. Workers threw some wet clothes and curtains that Jorge had burnt out onto the *patio*. Then came the affected metal bunk frames and mattresses. John went out and grabbed some of the metal and took it out to the parking lot. Ismael and Cristián had already made several runs to the compactor with full trash cans and were now helping carry the heavy metal down to 117. Sergio (*Chuncoco*) at first directed John to keep walking with it the rest of the way, then handed him a floor squeegee instead and told him to help get the water out of 118A, which he did, along with Michael and, later, Raúl (trafficker) and Ismael. With everyone chipping in, the main task was completed by 11:00 a.m. Having repaired the burnt electrical outlet, Carlos then went up to install the promised new shelving at the foot of John’s bed.

Meanwhile, Castro called John into his office (in *Chuncoco*’s presence) and mumbled some things that John could not understand until Castro repeated himself three times. He told John to take his hands out of his pockets, but John thought he asked him to get a chair. He then said John had to add the third bunk back, which—once understood—John said was not possible since Aníbal had cut the posts off. The skinny little man with even more attenuated brains then took him up to his cell so he could explain. He did so but Castro still could not understand. Carlos then left off the shelf installation, not wanting to be involved with the militarystyle lecture to come. Some things simply taxed Castro’s brain too much and he suggested that John was really dumb to not be able to see that the just-installed shelf would have to be torn down and the posts that used to be on the bed would have to be mounted on the wall so that the new mattress might be kept.

Castro did not realize that the bed ’s iron grill was a fixed length and that it would have to be somehow stretched fifteen centimeters to reach the wall where the posts would be installed under the *paco*’s plan—the posts at the head of John’s bed remaining intact. Castro was also unable to grasp John’s subtle offer to pay him off as he had others, or appreciate that John had been helping three *gendarmes* with English. None of that mattered, or at least none of it could penetrate his chimp brain. He was enjoying dominating John too much. John then said he would talk to Aníbal, who was nonplussed when he did so, and Castro asked John if all was taken care of. He said, “Yes,” and went out onto the *patio*, where he complained about being hassled (and paying off other *pacos* in vain) to Rubén, Miami, and Cristián—who was also miffed by Castro after he had derailed his tattoo business that day (for whatever reason). Without saying a word, Miami then went to work on the matter, and Sergio (*Chuncoco*) was already doing so. The latter came into the dining area an hour later while John and Cristián were playing chess, slapping his hands together as if washing them with the air.“It’s all taken care of.” Somewhat surprised, John inquired if he was referring to Castro’s impossible edict and Sergio replied,“Yes,” then scurried off after John thanked him. The grill for the bed had to remain in the cell, however, propped up against the wall by Alexis’ bed. Miami came in a while later and also claimed success in reasoning with the little man. Time would tell. Aníbal was still unsure that Castro’s leaving John alone was a done deal and Alexis suggested going over Castro’s head and talking to the officers

John knew. One thing for certain, in John's mind, was that there would always be hell to pay with Castro in charge.

Sure enough, the next day it became evident that Castro had not changed his tune. Both Sergio and Miami were mistaken. Aníbal called John in from the *patio* to remove his bedclothes, pointing to the arc welder he had borrowed and letting him know the plans were to modify the structure of his and Alexis' bunk bed. They were going to get those fifteen centimeters—at John's expense—and without bolting anything to the wall. Aarón, whose expertise in welding had slipped John's mind, just built the new structure out from the old base and up, then added fifteen centimeters to the length of the top bunk. He also welded about forty-five centimeters of new grill all along the side of John's bed, making a firm base to support his larger mattress. The only problem was that the resulting headroom was insufficient for John to be comfortable and the infernal crossbar at John's feet needed to be removed again—which Aníbal had neglected or forgotten to do. That would be work for the next day. The cell and most everything in it was left full of fine dust (although the men did clean up the more evident mess), and Alexis said he would clean their cell the next day (Sunday) since he had a shorter workday. Then the workers would surely collect cash from John, although he did not yet know how much. Carlos had to move the shelving he had just installed the day before to a space below the food cabinet. It no longer fit with the new bunk structure. He also tidied up some dangling wires and put a few small bolts in the concrete to hang a laundry bag and Alexis' backpack. In some sense the cell was being improved, other than John's reduced headspace.

The worst part was when Sergio (*Chuncoco*) confirmed the rumor that Alexis had heard: the *gendarmes* would soon be sending a new cellmate to John and Alexis from *módulo* 107. John just knew that Castro was bound and determined to pester him. It might be Karim, Raúl (the elder), or Alexis (the serial child abuser or perhaps rapist) who had been in 118 before, or it might be someone else. John and Alexis prayed that it might be another Christian or at least someone with similar lifestyle values like Guillermo—a nonsmoker who did not want a television, or take drugs and use pornography, and who did not mind John teaching with the Historic Baptists on Thursday night or Sunday afternoon. In fact, Alexis would speak to *mayor* Toledo the next day and ask her to come speak to John, who would, in turn, ask her if Guillermo could be moved back in. Guillermo said he would talk with his Admiral friend and see if he could call in a favor, getting the Admiral to place a call to Toledo in the morning.

According to Sergio, whose information was not always accurate, the *gendarmes* planned to fill every two-man cell in 118 with a third inmate coming from 107 or elsewhere. Sergio, however, had been wrong the day before when he washed his hands in the air, as well as a month earlier when he arranged the 50,000-peso payment with Cisternas that would allow John to permanently live alone. So, uncertainty still reigned. There was never a fully calm, predictable, or certain day in terrestrial hell. Each day brought its own new grief. Like Jesus said, "Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Matthew 6:34b), somewhat akin to life in prison never having a dull moment. At least Jana was able to bring John's *encomienda* bags over, and one for Miami, too. That service was predictable and reliable. Jana had filled in for Pamela this week since *encomienda* delivery time overlapped with Pamela's Zoomcast Italian lessons. Miami was also predictable, doing John's bathroom cleaning task while he was upstairs separating the roast beef, chicken breast, golden potatoes, and white rice into plastic containers that would go into the freezer, and preparing some pizza to be shared with Miami, Rubén, and others after he got back down.

Beyond surprises in John and Alexis' cell structure and possible new cellmates, there was also more news down on the *patio*. Jorge had been moved out of cell number 17 upstairs and placed into another cell by himself in 118A. Hobbling Pato had been moved out of his cell and put in with Moroni, leaving behind his previous cell for Jorge. "Why would they put the same guy who just burned up his cell a couple nights ago into a new cell by himself?" John wondered. There were no added security measures undertaken. There was nothing to stop him from doing the same thing again. It seemed like the *pacos* were just asking for more trouble. Around midday, a new *machucado* arrived who would be set at liberty the following day. Jorge identified him as one of his former *perros*, and he was a tough guy who mouthed off—tough enough for Castro and another *paco* to go up to him with batons drawn, ordering him back to his cell—despite Jorge's intercession. That sight was not often seen on 118's *patio*.

Seeing Jorge sitting alone in the *bodega* with just a towel wrapped around him (waiting to use the shower), John took the opportunity to speak with him—something that Rubén and Miami the day before had said was unthinkable and likely dangerous. He asked him how he was, to which Jorge replied that he could not extend his stub below the knee on account of severe pain. John expressed Christian concern for him, noting that he had heard that the one-legged man was despondent and had tried to commit suicide by lighting the fire in his cell. Jorge smiled and said that was not the case. John then pointed out he almost died, to which he replied, "What does it matter if five or six *machucados* get killed anyway? I was trying to get out of here." John appreciated his openness. John had simply been a nice enough guy with the *machucados*, helped by being a Christian who always wore his faith on his sleeves, that permitted him access to such an interview. John's public gun use and chess playing might also have helped get him close, too. Like Miami, probably no one in prison who knew John thought he was a criminal or untrustworthy, or as having foul intentions. Jorge thus confirmed that the fire was set intentionally and with a strategic purpose in mind: to get transferred to the minimum-security Limache prison, one-half hour inland from Viña del Mar. He could get everything he wanted there, too. So far, his tactic had not worked; but there might be other opportunities in the near future to make his plan effectual. John was just glad not to be in the 118A building. He was sure that others over there were worried, especially when they screamed out the window at night, scolding Jorge for what he did and asking him not to repeat it. His neighbors Delfín, Daniel, Pato, and Moroni had to be especially concerned. Surely, the next day would bring its own trouble.

Yet, surprisingly, the next day featured a lunch party instead—and Jorge was seated with everyone else. Rubén placed both tables end-to-end in the dining area. All the chairs under the holed-out *bodega* were brought over. The *machucados* borrowed a small oven from someone in 118 and put it in the dining area. Moisés used it to cook chicken and pork in tasty sauce. Michael cut up boiled potatoes, carrots, and greens for a mayonnaise-based salad. Marino bought several big bottles of lemon soda and some apricot juice. John contributed nothing more than a little Kraft mayonnaise and the use of his utensils. While all was being prepared, he read his novel more than usual and beat Ismael thrice and Rubén twice in chess. New arrival from 107, Miguel (53), watched the festivities. A calm, nice, and very fat man, he had been locked up with Karim, Raúl (the elder), and Alexis (the nice child molester) for two months in 107, after doing a quarantine stint in horrendous 108. His *castellano* (Spanish) was largely unintelligible—even worse than Castro's and similar to Sergio's from 118B—and John had to constantly ask him to repeat what he said, unless Rubén (one of his new cellmates) was around to translate. Miguel had

been anxious to meet John after reading some of his 2009 textbook, *A Primer on Modern Themes in Free Market Economics and Policy* (Spanish version), which Rubén had lent him after reading twenty-five pages himself. “Is that a lot of pages to read in a day?,” he asked. John encouraged the television addict: “Of course it is! Good job!” Miami washed John’s clothes and bedding, hanging it out under the clouds, passing the time before the lunch party.

The jovial *machucados* were not about to be dissuaded by Castro’s stern early-morning pep talk, wherein (among other things) he prohibited all *reos* to leave the *módulo* or for 118 *reos* to go into 118A/B for any reason without permission—effectively knocking out John’s daily candy delivery to Delfín and Daniel. Castro had also purposely got John and the others in his wing out of their cells last that morning, such that the men were already in line by the time John got down with his two bundles of laundry atop his chair, in order to publicly mock John for being twenty seconds late. It was 8:30 a.m. and Castro’s stated policy was for formation at 8:45 a.m., so John was not technically late. In fact, he had never been late unless he was sick in bed, so it was a bit odd that Castro had gone out of his way to make such a scene. All the *reos* knew John was one of the first men on the *patio* each morning. Hence, without removing his backpack, John took his usual place next to Miami and called off his number, *veinte* (twenty), in time. Castro was pretty much a detestable villain for nearly everyone in the lineup anyway, so the whole matter blew over right away and the *reos* quickly began their preparations for the surprise festivities they had planned.

John sat outside reading and talking to Miguel for the first few minutes of the meal then joined the others. There was not much point to joining, given that all the noise of one *machucado* talking over another, John understood almost nothing. What was clear was that Michael, Moisés, and Marino were making comments or telling stories that brought the house down. John had never seen the *machucados* laugh so hard—almost uncontrollably. John figured it was probably best that he did not know what they were laughing about anyway. Jorge laughed along, too, as if nothing had happened a few nights ago. Earlier, John was doing his private worship service in the barber room when Jorge hobbled in and grabbed a plastic sandwich bag off the top of the tall cabinet, containing something wrapped in a paper towel. He stuffed it in his shorts and then signaled to someone in the cell above that all was well, thanking him. John figured it was a package of drugs, a replacement cell phone, or both. Now Jorge was happy again, at least for the moment. As John was reflecting on this thought at the table, he glanced over and saw Ismael wipe his greasy fingers on the overhanging tablecloth. He, Moroni, and Cristián had been drinking their lemon soda and fruit juice out of the same coffee mug, too. (There must have been a shortage of glasses and napkins, making such improvisations necessary.)

After lunch, John shared a few peanut-butter-filled celery sticks with people who wanted them and listened to Rubén gloat over his 5,000-peso poker winnings and Ismael bemoan his 10,000 peso losses. Then José showed up with *rancho*, which no one ate of course. He called John over to show him a young sparrow he had put in his zipper pocket. He said he caught it when it was too wet to fly, although it did eventually fly away. Still, for a *machucado*, having a pet for a while was a small joy. The bird leapt out while he was showing it to John and José ran after it like a dropped piece of treasure, recovering it in less than thirty seconds. Sometimes the *reos* would enjoy singing, too. John wrote out the lyrics for Elvis Presley’s song (as Sergio from 118B was astonished to see he was able to do), “I can’t help falling in love with you,” and gave them to Ismael—who was struggling with the English as he sang it. Then John sang the song loudly and

Ismael harmonized, with Sergio muttering a few words along the way. It was actually fun and drew a small bit of interest from people on the *patio*—especially after Sergio had got the *machucados* all primed (no doubt generating gaping mouths and raised eyebrows in response) by revealing to them that the *gringo* was able to write in English. John figured that even though it may seem odd to some, in all fairness, it was a lot to presume that a *machucado* would know that an American could read or write in English. Rubén also had difficulty explaining to Michael how John could be both Italian and Chilean presently, and American formerly, but the mystery only added to the intrigue regarding the *gringo*. So the day ended up being a relatively happy one. That evening, however, after John and Valentín had finished the Historic Baptists Sunday meeting, Alexis informed John that sycophant Carlos had told him that he would soon be moved out of John's cell. That would likely be bad news for both men. John reflected, "How could there be any lasting happiness in terrestrial hell?" At least John's sheets finally dried and Miami brought them to John's cell, slipping them through the portal so that he could avoid sleeping on a bare mattress.

The next day, Cisternas reiterated all of Castro 's prohibitions but, overall, the day was mellow. No English lessons were requested either. Instead, John delighted almost everyone on the *patio* with *guacamole*, cheese, chicken, and beef burritos. Miami finished up the rest of John's laundry that had dried nicely in the sunshine and did John's bathroom cleaning duties for him again in order to keep the *pacos* off his back. He also helped Jorge send an *escrito* asking for a disabled person's identification card (*carné de invalidez*). It is amazing how much help a crazy *machucado* pyromaniac can get from nice people. Miguel had a bunch of questions for *pastor* John, which he answered, about *pastoras* (women in pastoral ministry, which the Bible prohibits in 1 Timothy 2:11-14 and 1 Corinthians 14:34) and whether the special, miraculous, and revelatory gifts of the Spirit are still active today (which John told him they were not). Miguel planned to start attending services with John on Wednesdays and Sundays. Ismael listened to them talk without showing much interest except for saying that the prohibition of *pastoras* was *machista* and that he had free will (*libre albedrío*) to disagree with God. John realized that he had definitely fallen off the boat.

John also spoke with new *reo* Carlos (the elder, age 56 with glasses and mostly bald), recently out of the hospital after major abdominal surgery and being saved from a serious knife wound between his heart and lung. He was charged with attempted murder and attempted femicide after he found his quasi-wife in bed with another man. Carlos was high on pills and booze at the time and went berserk, trying to kill both of the adulterers and nearly perishing himself in the process. All in all, it was a rather relaxed Summer day, highlighted by such apropos conversation, Mexican food, reading, and a few games of chess. John and Alexis were happy that no new cellmates showed up, too.

Chapter XVI Crush Satan Under Your Feet

Later that afternoon (February 8, 2021), Valentín received the second shipment of the paperback English versions of John's latest books (written while he was in prison)—*Bearing the Cross* (volume 1) and *Suffering Unjustly*—from the publishing arm of Amazon in the United States. He packaged and processed them for overnight delivery (along with a concise letter that John had written and lawyer David Zúñiga had reviewed) to the Supreme Court judges hearing his case. Identical packages were also sent to John's lawyers in Santiago and Viña del Mar—including Améstica who was up to that point not thrilled by the idea of sending the books. John's testimony regarding the events in Reñaca on November 10, 2019—found in Chapter XIX (page 240) of *Bearing the Cross*—was bookmarked in each package. Time was of the essence since the final ruling was only eight days away. Valentín's preparation of the packages had taken longer than expected, such that they were not brought to the Chilexpress delivery service until the following day. Nevertheless, besides his legal team's excellent defense, there was now added reason for optimism. Two of the judges were lawyers filling in, appointed by President Piñera's Minister of Justice, Hernán Larraín Fernández. These lawyers, Diego Munita Luco and María Cristina Gajardo Harboe, did not require (leftist) Senate confirmation and were from the political Right. They might be favorably impressed by the books. So might one or two of the other judges—Leopoldo Llanos Sagristá and Juan Manuel Muñoz Pardo in particular. In John's strategic opinion, his books seemed to be his best defense, not only because they detailed witnesses' testimonies at trial and John's testimony—neither of which having been heard or published heretofore, but because they showed a side of John that the mass media had not shown: a professional scholar and writer who was not crazy, nor a racist, or not bigoted, and a man who was a dedicated Christian without malice. John had defended himself against aggression in Reñaca; he did not attempt to murder anyone and only by accident did one ricochet strike Ahumada in the thigh and another (possibly) pierce Molina's radiator. His books were the only available counter to the storm of public opinion against him, and revealed how much he had been forced to suffer in the horrendous Valparaíso penitentiary—both before and after being wrongfully convicted. Moreover, the biography showed John as a person who was quite different than the great majority of the characters in prison he was forced to interface with for so many months.

Thinking about John's situation, Miami commented on Chilean criminal justice. "Live testimony from witnesses is taken and believed without having any convincing proof to back it up." John had certainly experienced precisely that at his trial with the mendacious Ahumada and his four lying friends—all coached. Miami continued: "In Chile, it is not necessary to back up one's testimony with facts, making it easy to imprison a man based on false testimony. The unscrupulous and ambitious district attorney, who is usually a personal friend of the judges, prepares the witnesses to lie and they do so. In cases where the district attorney does not have enough evidence he offers the defense attorney a plea bargain for a lesser penalty in exchange for an admission of guilt. A person who has done nothing wrong often becomes culpable by such admissions. The majority of those convicted by plea bargains feature unfounded evidence against them. Yet these fearful people sign because, as has often been seen in 118, doing so allows them to leave 'preventive prison' early." He then asked John, "Do you know how to solve this horrendous injustice?" John replied, "By installing a jury system." "That's right," said Miami.

Pondering such terrible things seemed to draw Michael closer to John than he was to Luís Ahumada, whom he started to refer to as an *acquaintance* rather than a *friend*—insistently correcting John each time he confused the two terms. John was well-respected by nearly everyone in 118, and that respect had continued to grow over time. His story about what happened in Reñaca was believable. Miguel and Rubén also showed a great deal of respect for him by reading his textbook. In fact, without a television to distract them, they had been taking turns reading the same copy for several hours a night. Rubén was still winning the race, having reached page 200, while Miguel was on page 170—which was remarkable given that neither man had post-secondary education. The latter man especially liked the concept of “logrolling” in parliaments and the theory of vote seeking. Both Rubén and Miguel’s lives had become a bit more interesting.

Not so for John, however, whose left shoulder still ached and who felt a drop of wastewater hit his head anew. For him, that day in 118 basically represented back-to-back boredom: another day with Cisternas. Frankly, John was pleased by not having Castro-fueled excitement in the *módulo*. Besides feeding people and talking about Bible concepts with Miguel, he endured his usual fare of dominating chess matches and reading *A Prayer for Owen Meany*. He did chat briefly with Cisternas, too, who was obviously avoiding further English instruction. The *paco* confirmed that he was now 118’s boss *along with* Castro. Both were in charge of giving inmates’ conduct scores and formulating strategies and policies for the *módulo*. John thought it was odd having two men running the show with equal authority. He was, of course, much more comfortable talking with his pro-American fan Cisternas than communist Castro. For example, he asked and received permission from Cisternas to deliver candy to Delfín’s cell. He would not have even tried to approach Castro with such a request.

Speaking of fans, Miguel continued to make inquiries regarding Bible motifs with pastor John, such as the nature of the state (Luke 4:5-7) and whether Christians were obligated only to visit other Christians in prisons and hospitals, or if unbelievers were included, too (to which John replied, “No,” based on Matthew 25:40,45). Miguel had almost blue eyes but his mother was of Mapuche Indian ancestry, and he spoke that language to some extent at home. He lived in the countryside in Purén, on land akin to an Indian reservation in the U.S.A., just east of Temuco. He had seventy hectares, featuring trees, domesticated farm animals, and patches of wheat and smaller, mountain potatoes grown for home consumption. Miguel was happy to be in 118.¹⁰⁷ was terrible, with brutal fighting between *machucados* living on the lower floors, and limited items that could be entered through *encomienda*. He lived too far away to have visitors or *encomienda* anyway (his crime was committed in Valparaíso and that is why he was jailed in its penitentiary rather than one in Temuco). At least he got five hours (or more) of *patio* time every day in 118, compared to just one in 107. Thus, for him, there was good news abounding both from not having to be in 107 any longer and from the positive growth he was experiencing in 118. And he was not alone. Due in large measure to the intervention of his friend the Admiral, Guillermo received paperwork that he would soon be transferred from 111 to minimum-security Casablanca prison—located thirty minutes down the highway east from Valparaíso to Santiago. He first had to pass through a quarantine period of fifteen days in 109. Still, that news was a relief for him, John, and others in 118 who were worried about him.

People looked out for John as well. “Ask Cabo Penailillo if you can go back to your cell to sleep,” several of the *reos* said. Ismael went to ask permission on behalf of John—who could not

keep his head off the table in between chess moves. John had already won games against Rubén and Ismael but was really dragging in his daily rematch with Ismael—so much so that Ismael went to get permission for John to head upstairs. Having attained it, John quickly shared his delicious turkey, cheese, and lettuce—with BBQ sauce and mayonnaise—sandwich with Miami, Rubén, and Miguel. He shared his chips with Sergio (from 118B), too, then packed up his stuff and went upstairs. There Carlos greeted him with the bill for all the recent work: 115,000 pesos (USD 157)! He had installed two more intermediate shelves in the food dispensary hung on the wall, and raised the upper bunk to increase John’s headspace, plus Aníbal had put the plastic rectangle back up on the ceiling to catch any wastewater drops. The major cell upgrade was now done and John was heading to bed.

He had just changed into his pajamas when Penailillo arrived.“Who gave you permission to come up here?” “You did,” John replied.“Oh okay. Do you think you could give me some Lucky Strikes?” The time to bribe the *paco* had finally come. However, he fumbled through his backpack in vain; some *machucado* had stolen the pack of Lucky Strikes from his backpack—thwarting Pamela and his plan to buy them cheaper from the supermarket. So, John had to end up giving 5,000 pesos to the *paco*, who would in turn give the cash to *Chuncoco*, who would run to the kiosk and buy the required cigarettes. John had offered Penailillo the pack of Pall Malls that he still had, but the *paco* refused to take them since he only smoked Lucky Strikes. Alexis, upon hearing the tale, said the term for such bribery requests was *sacar maquila*. Having that business taken care of, John got three hours of sleep. Maybe the sleepiness was due to the antihistamine he swallowed at 7:30 a.m. to combat insect bites, or maybe it was the subconscious stress that arose from this being his fifteen-month anniversary in prison.

The previous evening in bed had brought a worse problem: six bug bites on John’s right leg and hip. Were the bedbugs back? John changed his pajamas and put them in a sack for Miami to wash the next day. After putting on a fresh pair, no further welts appeared that night and no new itchy skin emerged. Maybe the incident was isolated? Or maybe his new mattress had some eggs that finally hatched? Did Alexis bring some bedbugs or fleas in his clothes that had spread to John’s bed? The next couple of days would tell. In the meantime, John focused on his books arriving at the Supreme Court. As of mid-afternoon Wednesday they had not made it, but there was some indication online that they had gotten there by 6 p.m. John hoped that the books could (1) change the judges’ and the public’s perception of him; (2) change the judges’ incentives to keep him locked up; (3) make them take a better look at the trial evidence, which overwhelmingly showed that John did not attempt to murder anyone; (4) serve as evidence that John is not like other prisoners of common criminals; and (5) grant some insight into how a very bad judicial system continues to dominate Chile, which also features horrible prisons. He spent some time on his other new book’s translation, *Padeciendo Injustamente (Suffering Unjustly)*, too, which was so close to being done yet its progress had ground to a standstill. Thus, John had been contacting his network of friends to see what could be done to move it along.

That morning, just after breakfast, John sat in the *bodega* with Miguel (with Daniel and, sometimes, Christian overhearing) and talked to him about Galatians 3:24,“the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” Miguel, missing lots of teeth and with his beard now shaved and a new crew cut (but without his reading glasses), said he did not know“the law” or Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. John thus proceeded to review them with him from memory. Miguel wondered how anyone could be saved since we all had lied. John then

explained the work Christ on the cross in atoning for our sins—burying them in his tomb, and that through faith in Him and believing in His resurrection we may attain forgiveness for our sins and eternal life.“Why has my Pentecostal pastor never taught this doctrine? We only hear about tithing and other practical topics.” John said he did not know, other than perhaps the pastor did not know the doctrine himself. The two men would continue further conversation on Sunday. John asked Miguel to read the Ten Commandments as homework. In the meantime, violence continued to explode around Miguel’s hometown of Purén, with trucks being burned and one person wounded by gunfire.

John tried to keep up with these tragedies in Chile, along with family matters at home and abroad, such as his son David’s emotional recovery after breaking up with his girlfriend Jordan, and his wife’s continued medical examinations, along with her difficulty keeping up in Italian class. He started playing chess with his son David online (with chess.com), too, and picked up the pace of his own Italian study with the Pimsleur course that his friend Joe had sent him as a gift. Between writing, reading, teaching, chess playing, and food preparation, plus these sorts of extracurricular online activities, John was finding a lot of productive things to do in jail. There was hardly ever a dull moment. If only the bedbugs would stop biting! John’s friend Dale recommended rubbing garlic oil or even garlic powder on his body to fend off pests. Trouble is that garlic is not that easy to come by in prison.

“ Another problem is rats and mice falling into the tea or wash water being prepared or used by the *rancheros*,” Alexis said. “Of course everything gets sanitized after it happens,” he continued, but John thought even less of *rancho* than he did before. José apparently liked rodents as much as the little sparrow he had in his pocket. He saved their lives despite the *ranchero* sergeant’s orders to the contrary. Lack of hygiene among food preparers in prison was simply astounding. The same was true with the “cake” made by the *machucados* of 118B with milk-soggy cookies, put in the freezer then coated with *manjar*. Castro had requisitioned one such “cake” for Sergio (*Chuncoco*)’s 43rd birthday when he found out that it was Moroni’s 53rd, too. So there was a double birthday celebration. Everyone sang and clapped for them in the dining room, but John passed on the “cake.” He was dominating in chess again, and was trying to remain out of Castro’s view. His son David was a much better chess player than those in 118. Castro asked about his English teaching, singling out Necúlman as an odd duck. John did not take the bait in order to feed Castro’s interest in gossiping. Castro could not be trusted. He replied, “Necúlman has always seemed like a good guy to me.”

There was some other news: John ’s inside man at the Supreme Court confirmed that his books had reached the judges. Like always, John and his network of supporters were hoping and praying for the best. Alternatively, John was not so pleased with the cowardice of Chilean publishers Conservadora, ZigZag, and Líbero, which all had evidently decided not to publish his book after showing initial interest. They were scared of what might happen to them if they were associated with John. Getting the truth out, even if many books were sold, was not as important as preserving their reputations among the media and general public. John was simply too hot to handle, even for most of the Chilean Right.

Amidst the mixed news, John decided it was a good time to count his many blessings. After all, some good things had emerged from his ordeal. For one thing, he believed he had made a true friend in Miami—an actual friendship that might be continued outside of prison. He also

believed that he had learned a lot more about the theology of Christian suffering, in particular how to take his eyes off himself and always look at how God might be glorified most through his circumstances, as well as to see His purposes in dispensing justice in damning even more harshly those who persecute Christians for “doing good” or living by biblical principles. Doing good has its consequences in this life especially at the hand of the wayward state and the false witnesses raised up in its judicial arm.

John also believed his wife, Pamela, had grown in her understanding of Baptist theology and occasional suffering in life. Like John, she had become more sanctified through the time of testing. Indeed, many people in John’s circle had been tested by God through John’s imprisonment. Some were tested to see what they would do with their resources: how much would they give? Some failed that test, but many passed it. Others had learned experientially what John had taught about the theology of the state and its satanic nature, thinking that should by now have become manifestly clear through John’s experiences—not to mention those of many others who were unjustly imprisoned. Such men, too, might learn about the glory and justice of God once they repented from their sins and turned to Christ for salvation. John hoped that he had been useful to some extent as a witness for Jesus Christ over the last fifteen months.

His pistol shots were in fact the first four of a potentially catastrophic conflict in Chile between civilians: rightists and Libertarians versus communists and hard left militant factions—maybe even a civil war. In that sense, John learned how he might be useful in other ways in his society besides simply preaching the Gospel and teaching economics or public policy. He was living the life of a libertarian (Baptist) Christian who followed biblical principles and respected life, liberty, and property. It was an opportunity for him to be “salt” and “light” in a way in which he never had achieved before, and the same was true for Valentin, Obed, Daniel, and many other friends and Christians that he knew. People suffer for “doing good,” as the Apostle Peter said in 1 Peter 2:19-20. John’s time in prison also served to make his friends draw even closer to him than they were before. Indeed, John’s personal circle of friends grew wider and became tighter. He also had an opportunity to write two books and nearly finish a third one during his captivity, which was no small feat given the technological limitations he faced. Time would tell what impact they would have.

In a sense, John was now more “dangerous” to the Left than ever before, as well as to non-Christian ideology and rank public policies that counter either Christian or libertarian Worldviews. He had become the poster child of the Left, and one of the most hated men in Chile, although his support from admirers and followers from the Right, from libertarians, and from Evangelicals continued to increase. Many people showed their sympathy for John on account of the exaggerated sentence that he received compared to others, knowing that his case was highly political and stirred up by media hysteria more than anything else. People who knew him in prison seemed to have similar sentiments.

Yes, John would be more “dangerous” once let out because the pen is mightier than the sword, and John would be able to speak freely about his experiences in jail and the biased, perhaps corrupt, perversely incentivized judicial system that put him there. He had the academic tools from economic and public policy theory, as well as his particular Baptist theology and libertarianism, to explain most of the problems that he had faced. He could expose many of the evils in Chilean society that had been caused by leftist ideology and the attack of traditional or

Christian institutions. He also had a chance to be a witness for Jesus Christ to some people in prison, for which he was thankful, hoping that some of the work would become fruitful. All in all, he suffered tremendously in prison in many ways, but he also saw many blessings come from new knowledge, new friends, closer existing friendships, increased growth opportunities, and probably even better employment and activism possibilities upon departing from prison. He even lost a little weight and gained more patience, kindness, and humility.

For all that he was thankful and waited, and hoped, for a good resolution from the Supreme Court the following week. Indeed, the fame he had gained might become useful in his personal life, and to facilitate greater activism that would impel his supporters to achieve greater success in Chile. None of that circle was ashamed by John's imprisonment and suffering; on the contrary, they were rather emblazoned by it. How many other prisoners could say that? The *reos* in 118 were definitely impressed.

Chapter XVII Do Not Be Overly Wicked, nor Be Foolish

As John watched Sergio (from 118B) struggle to fix Rubén’s watch the next day, and then Miami come along and finish the job (it started out just swapping the watchband but got complicated once the back cover was opened for whatever reason), John was again musing about *hope*. Day in, day out, a *reo* goes through the same motions and—as Miami pointed out—boredom can set in like rigor mortis, after incarceration kills a man’s job, creativity, and thinking. That’s one reason why chess could be so interesting for *reos*. No game was quite the same, and the inmates had to apply intelligence, strategy, and creativity. In some sense, reading a book also countered boredom, which was a refreshing boon, but neither of these things rivaled talking about the writing of *Bearing the Cross*. There, some *reos* could imagine and talk about how their own auxiliary role unfolded as John made his way through “the valley of the shadow of death” (Psalm 23:4). There was similar enthusiasm from John’s supporters outside, many of whom devoured each new section as it was written and posted. They, too, participated with a real ancillary role in John’s reality show. Without hope of leaving the “valley” and returning to real life, neither the *reo* nor his supporters could long bear with going on. This sentiment was particularly true for men suffering wrongfully along with their families and friends. They all needed to be able to count the pages until the present chapter would end and a new one would start, whether through parole, acquittal, pardon, or benefits like *dominical* or weekends-home. *Bearing the Cross* also generated hope because it told the truth about prison life and the judicial process amidst the malaise generated by profiteering expert witnesses, courtroom lies, media biases, and distortions of reality that beleaguered or victimized most prisoners (even many of those who were guilty).

John felt this hope, as did his supporters, but all were too-often reminded of the many little things that could quickly dash such hope to pieces—like gray water dripping in one’s head and pillow, an assault by bedbugs and fleas while one is confined in his cell, or the pointed tip of a treasured smuggled-in, Chinese-made, pink-and-white paring knife breaking off. Little things or the tiniest nuisances could generate feelings of exasperation and hopelessness to a man confined in a cell without remedies. In John’s case, unlike most prisoners, some problems could be solved with money. He had paid for relief, and the plastic-and-wood contraption that Aníbal contrived to catch the disgusting drips had been enlarged and reinstalled. (The original device had been removed when the bunk bed was welded into its new form.) Moreover, the bedbugs or fleas had ceased biting him after his pajamas had been taken to Miami to wash. His prospects for hope were more readily restored, and the arrival of *Bearing the Cross* (volume 1) in the Supreme Court judges’ hands likewise provided a feeling of relief and added reason for hope. It even spawned similar feelings in Miami and other onlookers hopeful that something could be mounted against injustice in what seemed to be an unwinnable battle against the forces of evil and a Mafioso judicial system. They were in those moments living vicariously through John’s case and strategy. It provoked even more euphoria than news that Valparaíso and Viña del Mar would upgrade to phase 3 of Covid-19 quarantine during the coming week, permitting Sundays- and weekends-home to resume, as well as relaxing restrictions on regular visitation, allowing multiple visitors. Once in phase 4, the subsequent step, even conjugal visits would resume, as would visitation twice per week. Yet, *Bearing the Cross* even eclipsed those joys.

Similar feelings reached to the stupider criminals and delinquents, too. Moisés (30), for example,

explained how a traffic accident led to unexpected delays crossing the Bolivian border at Colchane. Instead of making the rational decision to illegally cross the next morning before dawn instead, the thief (lugging guns and at least thirteen ounces of pure gold in the form of stolen jewelry) tried to do so in broad daylight (11:30 a.m.)—so as not to mess up his day’s plans and schedule. The altiplano border was high, long, and relatively unpatrolled, with many places to get across. Drug traffickers crossed all the time, supplying Chile with significant amounts of cocaine. But Moisés just couldn’t wait. He was spotted by Bolivian authorities and arrested for crossing illegally. Once his background check was run, the police found that he had violated parole and was wanted for armed robbery and what Moisés had thought resulted in murder (instead of just attempted murder since the victim had survived) and was trying to flee the country. He also confessed to buying a plane ticket from Santiago to Iquique (in Chile’s northern tropical desert) using his own real national ID card and identifying number. Moisés had even left clues for the police to follow on his Facebook page, showing photos of his actual location and plans. The police had already known where he was heading, even if they were not able to nab him at the Iquique airport. He was the source of his own undoing in any number of ways. Miami, Rubén, and John were amazed as they listened to the tale of his bungled escape, impatience, and sheer stupidity at age 28. He did jail time in Iquique, Antofagasta, Copiapó, La Serena, Quillota, and Santiago (No. 1) before landing in the Valparaíso penitentiary. He said he was really happy with his arrangement in 118B, where he had few cellmates and he could pay the guards to bring him a cell phone, booze, food, and whatever else he needed. Indeed, he was quite pleased with the cooperative *pacos*. Now he was finally up for the Sundayshome benefit, too, and the sound of hope could be heard in his voice.

Yet, not all had risen to Moisés’ level of hope, especially new arrivals just beginning their prison journeys. For instance, Carlos (the elder) was in so much pain each morning that he went up to his cell to lie down right after breakfast. He explained to John that his injury was self-inflicted; an attempt at suicide after stabbing and slicing what turned out to be his live-in girlfriend and her lover-on-the-side. (Carlos had been separated from his wife for many years, finally divorcing her. He also knew that his consort was having an affair prior to catching her in the act.) High on drugs and booze, in his stupid rage, he only inflicted light injuries on the offending pair—instead of killing them—before trying to kill himself. Apparently, his victims had to call emergency services in order to save his life. He was a professional working at a hospital up to that fated day, who in a moment of passion bungled the job and ruined his life. “Maybe his employment contacts were how he got his high-level *gendarme* connection that allowed him to be housed in 118 after his hospitalization—instead of the general population?,” John wondered. Granted, he was an amateur criminal and had not expected what he would find at home, unlike professional thief and robber Moisés who should have known better and planned accordingly—including making a contingency plan, too. But Carlos should have been more thorough, making sure his victims were dead by his hand and could not call the ambulance to save his own life after he tried to take it. Now he had painful, cut, and sort-of-healed pectoralis muscles, a long chest-and-abdominal scar, constant pain, and a constant reminder of his humiliating botched job while high on drugs and alcohol. He would now live with all those thoughts in confinement for many years, starting with his new cellmates Marcelo and Raúl (the drug trafficker) and his noisy, anti-sleep apnea machine. He was a man with little hope at the moment beyond some vain expectation of leniency from a judicial and prison system licking its chops to take hold of him and not let him go. Suffering from type 1 diabetes (he showed John his insulin supply and injection kit), hypertension, and a herniated disk, he balked at John’s

suggestion that he might be breathing in his own toxins by wearing his Covid-19 mask all the time. He was not about to die from that dread disease. But he seemed to be going from bad to worse. John wondered how he would survive.

Prisoners also have a hard time dealing with problems that family members face. For example, the scanner doctor diagnosed Pamela with a small (15-millimeter) tumor on her kidney—even though her blood work showed no malignant abnormalities. She had to await further interpretation from her gynecologist or urologist. Would a biopsy be necessary? Getting her to schedule the appointment was not easy; she liked to forestall doing so and simply assume all was well. It probably was, but she did not seem to care that others did not have such confidence and grew in concern as time went by. John's inability to be there for his wife weighed upon him heavily—especially because he was locked up unjustly for crimes he did not commit. Wrongful imprisonment takes its toll on a man. Nonetheless, the lying witnesses and cunning, evil district attorney faced no reprisals for their foul play. For that reason, the same sinister process has been repeated again and again in Chile. In John's case, much like Miami's and Ismael's, the craft of evildoers left much damage in its wake and those who practiced it were simply numb to the damage they had caused innocent people. Like selfish sadists torturing a lizard or bug tied on a string over a flame, they enjoyed doing wrong. Indeed, akin to monsters like Stalin, they had no conscience so long as their personal pleasures were being satisfied while they themselves bore no responsibility for their actions. Perhaps more than Pamela's, John's health was stable at least. He still had the same problem with his eyesight, although he was getting used to it, his left shoulder pain was still present but had subsided somewhat, and he knee pain had gone (and, in case it flared up again, Alexis' son bought him a hot water bottle and sent it via *encomienda*).

Carlos (the elder) filled John in the next day with other clarifying details. He had worked for thirty-six years in the operating room of a hospital in Quilpué, twenty minutes inland from Viña del Mar. He had two university diplomas from low-quality Santo Tomás University that allowed him to be in charge of the scalpels and other instruments used during each surgery. His use of the word "dictatorship" instead of "military government" under Pinochet revealed his centrist politics, as he admitted. As a public employee, he was not paid well, but that fact—along with the four years he spent in the Navy—helped land him in 118 (rather than some direct personal connection). He was also an at-risk prisoner and a first-time offender. He loved high quality booze and, that day wherein he tried to remove two unfaithful people from the earth, he was washing pills down with Jack Daniels whisky. He had lost 2.5 liters of blood and barely made it in time to the Naval Hospital in Viña del Mar. Five other area hospitals were consulted along the way and none were able to receive him. He seemed very humbled by all that had transpired. John's friend Joe had suggested that he convey some dietary information to Carlos: that changing his diet to include coconut oil and avocado oil might be sufficient to eliminate his diabetes on its own. Carlos was not interested in the idea, saying that a diet consisting of many foods in moderation was all that was needed. "Being prison might just end up killing Carlos, whether directly or indirectly," thought John.

The weather had definitely been weird that summer. Rainfall (50 millimeters) during the summertime was unheard of—in an area that received 350 millimeters per year on average—almost entirely in the southern winter. The dampness meant that John's clothes were still not dry. At least the rain kept the cows happy with fresh grass growing. There were fewer forest fires, too. Cristián was happy since the poor weather impelled more people to get tattoos, for whatever

reason. Cisternas was not seen after roll call and Miami, Rubén, and Sergio (from 118B) enjoyed pizza brought by Pamela, with Marino snapping a few photos with his cell phone. As it turned out, 118 on *encomienda* day, especially in bad weather, was just one big happy family enjoying good food while John dominated three players in seven games of chess.

Carlos (the elder) was quite a conversationalist around John, and seemed to be interested in repeating his tale to others. Rubén had asked John for the low-down on Carlos and, while he was telling him, Carlos walked back in the dining hall. John believed it was fine to tell others about the details of Carlos' crime, since Carlos made public affirmations about it. However, in order to avoid even the appearance of gossip, John told him that Rubén had been asking questions about his circumstances and he was filling him in. Looking at Rubén, Carlos asked him what he would like to know, then proceeded to provide some basic information. He had given John many more details of his situation while waiting for breakfast to arrive. For instance, he had lots of support from his first wife and their three adult children: including a son (34) and stepson (26) in the Navy, plus good contact with his grandchildren. Getting money and *encomienda* in prison was hardly a problem for him. His ex-wife (who had remained single) was very happy to hear that Carlos intended to remarry her. Carlos had lost ten kilograms and a lot of muscle mass through his ordeal, and was limited to walking and climbing stairs for exercise on account of the pain in his chest. He used to work out a lot but no longer could. Ironically, when he stabbed himself he felt absolutely no pain because he was so stoned. His second family also featured three teenage children (one born to his consort prior to hooking up with her), including a fourteen-year-old who was home at the time the violence occurred and who would now no longer speak with him. Carlos had given that family his property and car to use, and his consort had made unauthorized withdrawals from his bank account. No formal separation agreement was planned but his second family was in shambles. However, Carlos had turned over a new leaf. He was a Catholic but was reading his Bible (and other books) daily and praying "our Fathers" often, instead of fully participating with the nonsense commonplace in prison cells. He had recently been studying the story of David and Goliath. He went his way and John got back to his routine.

It was another fun-with-food day, and 118 was pretty easy-going with Cisternas in charge. John brought down *guacamole* and Pancho Villa corn chips, which were just as much a hit as the meat, cheese, and *guacamole* burritos he made the night before, and which Miami had reheated at lunchtime using a *micrón*. Moroni, whose body was notably degenerating as one could see from the skin draping off his bony arms, also greatly enjoyed a burrito. Ricardo did, too. He was only on the *patio* on Sundays and had just come close to defeating John in chess, after capturing a knight. However, he bungled a move that should have finished John off, losing a rook in the process and, eventually, the game. He was consoled by the good food and John also spoke further to him about getting his Italian citizenship request underway—instead of dragging his feet. He needed to get his grandfather's birth certificate from southern Italy and the line of succession documents from the Chilean civil registry.

Watching the game, Ismael expressed concern that the *machucado* (Marino) who took photos of John and Miami would misuse them, although he could not explain how or why. He had been occupied for the last two days painting (light green with a white toilet area), shelving, fixing up things, and hanging a television in the cell next to John and Alexis. He had just moved in there along with Pato. John happily heard Christian music playing that morning from Ismael, but he still had to conduct his worship service alone. Nevertheless, after returning to his cell, he was

able to participate in the Historic Baptists Zoomcast service as usual, then have a nice dinner with Alexis where they disputed about the doctrine of a Christian's right to self-defense, considering Luke 22:35-39 and Acts 7:23-24.

Alexis believed he sinned by defending himself, while John believed he was obeying God when he defended himself. Alexis believed that self-defense could only be practiced in one's home rather than out on the street. John challenged him to show him where the Bible taught such a thing, noting that in the two aforementioned passages selfdefense occurred outside the home. Alexis suffered from the pacifism common among Chilean Evangelicals, who base their self-defense theology on public policy rather than the Bible. He said he would defend his wife by force at home but let her be raped or killed if they were assailed while walking or driving. John hoped he would think about it a bit more, giving him many examples of where Christians must violate public policy in order to please God (hiding Jews from Hitler's men, freeing black slaves in America in the 1850s, not aborting children after the first one in modern China, speeding to reach the hospital in an emergency situation, marrying despite the law saying it had to be in the Catholic Church before 1885 in Chile, not being able to divorce on grounds of adultery or abandonment in Chile prior to 2005, etc.). There are, unfortunately, many times where a Christian has to disobey public policy in order to obey God.

Chapter XVIII And the Dragon Gave Him His Power

For John, Monday, February 15, 2021 was marked by gloom and unexplainable depression—odd given that his blood pressure had been normal, his faith had been strong, his cell and cellmate situation was relatively good, and he had good reason for being optimistic about the Supreme Court’s resolution regarding his case coming out in fortyeight hours. The sky itself was gloomy and overcast, and Castro was in charge of 118—both of which could have set the stage for anyone feeling a little down. The expected phase 3 Coronavirus quarantine level had not been placed into effect, so visitation policy would not be changed for the better, and *dominicale*s’ hopes of going home on Sunday had been dashed. That was a bummer. However, Helmut, Richard, Bastián, and Matías Teno (*dominicale*s in 118B) were sent to a halfway house, wherein they would sleep at night while going out to work daily—definitely good news for them. Yet, ironically, hearing about someone else’s freedom was also a reminder that one was unfree still, compounding the gloom. John only managed to play three chess games, losing one of them and drawing another with Rubén, who strutted around the yard telling others. (He then went on to take one out of two games from Ismael and strut even more.) So even John’s chess game was off—despite the fact that it was his first loss in over a week (20 games). His record now stood at 1,555-142-36.

Miami told John that news had also come that Raúl (the elder) had been sentenced to twenty years without parole for femicide. There would be an appeal, but both men knew that it would be unsuccessful and that Raúl would likely end his days rather than sit in a general population *módulo* until age 91 (should the chain smoker live so long). That fact was sad, adding to the gloom. Both men had gotten to know Raúl well, even if they did not always concur with the talkative and worldly man, and even felt some sympathy for him. The murder was somewhat spontaneous and not premeditated. Indeed, Raúl did not act like or seem like a gun-slinging *machucado*, but now he would be treated like one. According to him, he was only planning to scare her when the gun went off at his daughter’s schoolyard. They could also relate to the cause of his crime: the mother of his daughter was refusing to let him see her. Many men around the world feel like Raúl after having a bad wife or girlfriend try to keep them from seeing their offspring. While those feelings did not justify murder, was it really just to deprive the girl of her remorseful Dad and put him in a hopeless situation if having to die in prison after years of torment without possibility of rehabilitation or parole? Why not just put him to sleep now, like a mangy or rabid dog, letting his 8-yearold daughter watch the execution if the state felt doing so would give her closure for the death of her mother?

John thought lethal injection would be far more humane than torturing an old man with confinement, loneliness, bedbugs, filthy sanitary and living conditions, secondhand drug smoke from cellmates, horrid food, terrible medical care, and no one but ignorant *machucados* to talk to (and habits to deal with). He was pretty sure that Raúl would agree with him, and he hoped that somehow the doleful reality might drive Raúl to faith in Christ so that he would have eternal life to look forward to. However, previous discussion with Raúl on that subject made John think saving faith was unlikely. Raúl was about to be plunged from 107 into a deeper terrestrial hell (and likely suicide) en route to eternal hell and torment. How could knowing that reality brighten one’s day? It certainly did nothing for John or Miami’s. Oddly, John reflected, one’s perspective and sympathies are changed once he knows the man about to die. John recalled how overly

optimistic Raúl was, having spent so much on an expensive lawyer and touting that delaying his trial would be a good tactic. It wasn't. He thought he might only be sentenced to ten years—maybe even five—for the murder. He also was such a firm believer in Chilean justice that he knew that John would be placed in home arrest (never prison) for no more than five years. (News of his eleven-year sentence must have come as a shock.) John always doubted his optimism based on what he knew from public choice theory and biblical theology of the state—its judicial arm in particular. Sadly, John ended up being right and Raúl was then no doubt humbled by his errant wishful thinking. All signs pointed to his life being over, and that was sad.

Perhaps the stage was set for a down day the night before, when *Cabo Salas* (the Protestant, somewhat English-speaking guard) came by at 10:45 p.m. to do a headcount of the prisoners in each cell. He showed John and Alexis the skin pigmentation changes on his face and chest, noting his treatment and upcoming doctor visit. He was grateful that John and Alexis offered to pray for him, but he asked that the prayer be done silently so that the *machucados* would not mock him once they found out that he had had prisoners praying for him. He then basically corralled John into talking through the portal for thirty to forty minutes longer. They covered all sorts of topics, including the injustice that had been done to John, inquiring how the *gendarmes* had been treating him (well—other than Castro), that all Chileans know that the system is unjust, the dangers of tornadoes and hurricanes in parts of America (Chicago and North Carolina being of particular interest to Salas), John's 2003 book *Bible and Government* (which Salas had yet to read), the dangers if inhaling one's own toxins by wearing a Covid-19 mask, John's possible transfer to prison in Italy, should the wrongful conviction stand, and a few other tidbits. In general, the *gendarmes* liked talking to John, but Salas seemed to have a lot more in common with him than most, similar to some of the officers. Listening to Salas talk of his plight and the judicial injustice that was commonplace in Chile—not to mention the stark reality of having to try to have an extended intellectual conversation through a metal door's portal—probably weighed heavily on John subconsciously. Was there really anything good coming from all this suffering? John had to believe there was.

There were a few positive happenings recently, too. Pamela had recounted the funny story of standing in the *encomienda* line trying to talk with Camila, Jorge's *flaite* girlfriend, who was very hard (even for her) to understand. She was ranting about how foolish Jorge's incendiary act was and how she was bringing his once-burnt-now-repaired crutches back. Jorge told John on the *patio* that the two women had spoken, with Camila joyfully reporting that she had rubbed elbows with the wife of that (perhaps notorious) "older gentleman who sat across from us in the visitation hall." Such tales amused John. He, too, tried to reflect on what fun he had bringing good food to the other *reos*, and the expressions on their faces, and why he liked helping Miami especially: "You help so many others but no one helps you, so I will," he told his friend. Ismael brought down his new music player and played nice Christian music in the dining hall, and Cristián mentioned how grateful he was to receive Baptist pastor Obed's sermonette—and to please keep sending them. Maybe their faith would blossom at some point after all, or get back on track as the case may be?

Yet none of these things were able to overcome the gloom generated by the aforementioned downers. Getting a call from his long-time libertarian friend Álvaro later that afternoon did seem to lift his spirits, however, as did reading Psalms 60 and 108, along with Isaiah 57:7-10, which Valentín said was his prayer for him. Even Álvaro, a nominal Catholic who no longer believed in

eternal life, said he would pray for John. John tried to convince him once again that he would be better-suited to be a naturally libertarian-leaning Baptist than a Catholic, who more often than not tended to be communists. That talk was fun. John's son David was also concerned for him and had been praying for him. As mealtime approached, John was craving a juicy Americanstyle hamburger, medium rare, with blue cheese. Maybe he would get one soon.

In the meantime, even going to get one 's own bottled water out of his cell didn't come without a price. Unbeknownst to John, Castro had just risen from his third-floor stairwell perch when he ran back up to his cell's floor (from the *patio*) the next morning. (It was the same place Castro sat when he confronted Mauricio and confiscated John's Huawei P10 cell phone from his backpack the year before.) "What are you doing?," he barked. Roll call formation had not been called yet, and John had just opened up his backpack in the dining room when he realized he had forgotten to bring down a bottle of flavored water. His quick trip back upstairs led to his disagreeable encounter with Castro. The former explained his purpose to the latter, who shooed him on his way like some pesky or lame kid, snarling his permission. Castro could ruin the start of any bad day in prison, making it worse. John imagined the Hollywoodized devil cruising around hell, doing what he could to increase the torment of its residents, whenever he encountered Castro. "What else could I have expected?," mused John, who recalled the words of Christ, "an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil" (Luke 6:45) and Jesus' brother James, who said "Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs?" (James 3:12). Men like Castro were simply downright evil, and to expect otherwise from them was folly. Any changes for the better from Castro 2020 were either feigned or cosmetic.

John was still not up to playing chess, but he did lose one very good, interesting game to Ismael. He then focused on reading his novel, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, or chatting with Miami. His friend was concerned that the prison psychologist had been reading an English copy of the first volume of this book—according to Ricardo who performed his quasi slave labor in the offices of the prison's social workers and psychologists. Miami reminded John that they controlled all parole or benefits (leave) decisions. Maybe the professional meant well, but Miami's flight-engineer mind directed him to always plan for the worst and not be surprised by anything. He wanted to make sure the situation was under control, with Ricardo serving as an information source, such that John would suffer no adverse consequences in case she did not like something she read. There could be other Castros in the jail, after all, and there certainly were in the district attorney's office—witness evildoers like Paola Rojas—and among certain conniving unjust judges. Together they represented a level of evil that went far beyond that of even the vast majority of prisoners guilty of heinous crimes.

Speaking of serious criminals, Ismael—who knew the ins and outs of murder convictions—shed some new light on Raúl (the elder)'s case. It seemed that he might be eligible for parole after all, if his homicide was in fact designated as featuring "simple" rather than "qualified" perpetuity. If so, he would have to have stellar conduct for the next fourteen years (having already served two), to cut off 20% of his sentence for good behavior. He could then leave prison at age 85. He might also be able to achieve *dominical*, then weekends-home, benefits, and eventually full parole after serving two-thirds of his sentence. That term's scenario amounted to him serving about thirteen years, five months— less the nearly two years he had already served. If he could qualify, it would put him back on the street when he was 82. Could he wait that long? Would his lungs and pancreas hold up that long? What if his high-priced lawyer failed to secure his parole? Would his

daughter and adult children living in New York come to visit him while he waited? Would it be worth it to him to put up with the aforementioned terrestrial hell for so long in a general population *módulo*, along with avoiding being affected by its violence, to emerge (possibly) as an old man? Miami purposed to try and talk with Raúl in 107, just as soon as a non-Castro *paco* was in charge of 118 who could take him over for a visit. He wanted to find out what Raúl was thinking, what his lawyer's legal strategy was, and if indeed his conviction had been designated as "simple." If a survival strategy was feasible, Miami would work it out with him.

Nonetheless, some things simply could not, must not survive, at least if John had his way. Bereft of his normal chess routine, he had declared war on the dining hall's flies, both when he was reading out in the (partial) sunshine or in the dining area. He was fast enough to smash several that had landed on his legs, and palmed several more by closing in slowly above them while they rested on the table below. Then he got sophisticated, using the rectangular lid of someone's food container and, like a player up to bat, knocking nine of them out of the air—stomping on them with his Adidas for good measure once they hit the floor. He was quite effective, showing his true killer instinct. But, alas, not everyone was a fan. The container's owner, *machucado* Marino, emerged and, upon witnessing a base hit, became incensed with John for dirtying his lid with fly residue. He ranted about how neither in his own home, and especially not in *cana* (prison), should John use someone's plasticware to kill filthy flies. John said nothing in reply but wondered, as Marino scowled off to the *pesebre*, if the *machucado* realized that flies had been crawling all over his plastic top for over an hour while he left it sitting out. Of course, *machucados* were not known for their logical capabilities. Marino had also warned John the day before about flushing toilet paper, since it would stop-up the toilet. So one had to give Marino credit for being consistent. Sitting near John, and listening to the rant about the flies, Sergio (from 118B) had a more proactive, pacific solution: he ran up to his cell and returned with a can of Raid. He sprayed down the entire dining room, and, admiring his work like a little boy would amidst the mist, smiled and boasted to John about how much more effective his solution was rather than was an imagined baseball player swatting flies and provoking some unintended conflict with a manners-spewing *machucado* who knew nothing but soccer and how to stab other inmates. In support of the thesis, Ismael commented that the Raid mist was quite fragrant and left behind a pleasant odor. All John could do was smell that hamburger that had been in his mind since yesterday.

Unfortunately, he would have to wait. The Supreme Court ruling was only somewhat in John's favor. The overall sentence was reduced to six years, twenty-six days, and the two attempted murder charges were dropped, replaced with lesser charges of property damage (301 days) and assault, *lesiones graves* (2 years, 89 days). That was the good part for John. The unjustified firing a gun in public charge remained unchanged, however (3 years, 1 day). Only one mitigating circumstance was allowed, too, with the other three or four Guillermo mentioned excluded—probably based on political considerations, since accepting another one would have reduced the overall sentence to under five years. There would be public outcry from the Left if John were sent to home arrest, but with the overall sentence over five years, home arrest was impossible. However, lawyers Guillermo Améstica, David Zúñiga, and especially Fabiola García were optimistic. Given his time already served, one year and ninety-seven days, John's remaining time (four years, 294 days) was under five years and thus might possibly be eligible for home arrest in part, mainly with respect to the three year sentence for unjustified firing of a gun in public. The case would have to go to the Constitutional Court to see. Transferring John to an Italian jail was

a good option under the Strasbourg Convention, but David Zúñiga said that Chile might object and would require an administrative or court battle, wherein hopefully the Italian Ambassador would intervene. An appeal could be made to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in San José, Costa Rica to help with John getting to Italy, and maybe to review other aspects of the case. The trouble was that the court was known to take many years before hearing a case. Guillermo also said the *ley indulto* (pardon legislation) might end up working in John's favor should the legislature pass it.

Otherwise, *dominical* benefits could commence in late November 2021, adding weekends-home a few months later and then just staying at the jail at night (subject to the *gendarmes'* favorable treatment of John), before full parole the subsequent November. There were many other details to be worked out but that was the general framework. Apparently, John's books did not arrive in time to have any impact on the judges, according to Guillermo. John's initial reaction was contentment with God's Providence but repugnance with Chilean justice, coupled with disappointment that he would not be going home. He was innocent in God's sight, despite wayward public policy to the contrary! He wanted to get to Italy as soon as possible, where he expected better benefits, although he was also willing to see what Chilean lawyers could do in Chile. The longer time in jail meant people would have to support him and his wife for a longer period as well, for which he was grateful but not exactly pleased by the burdensome situation. So the decision affected more than just John and Pamela. Miami also wanted to look over the internal options. There was time to do so, especially with no new trial. The lawyers would be getting back to John over the next few days.

That evening 's conference calls with John's supporters, explaining the new sentence and John's options (both in English and Spanish), yielded considerable anger, incensed reactions, and consternation. Even though the Supreme Court got it right in eliminating the attempted murder charges, the ruling still left much to be desired. How could it be that John would suffer six years of imprisonment for firing his pistol at the ground after being attacked and after hearing people screaming that they wanted to kill him—even if one ricochet hit a radiator and another wounded one of the principal assailants in the thigh? The supporters' overall reactions were mixed but mostly unhappy. While everyone agreed that all options should remain on the table to further mitigate John's sentence, some preferred the ones that entailed John and Pamela staying in Chile, and others thought getting transferred to Italy as soon as possible should be the priority.

They all had a bitter taste in their mouths from the injustice of the Chilean justice system, especially as the judges cowered before public opinion, arbitrarily inflating sentences for each "crime" or discarding *atenuantes* (mitigating circumstances) in order to keep John in prison. Those on the calls who were Christians were likewise appalled that actions that were not against biblical teaching or principles were used to condemn him. Shooting a gun in public and unintentionally striking a radiator were not in and of themselves immoral, even if they were against Chilean public policy, and should not be sanctioned by years in prison. Even if one was responsible for unintended damage or wounds caused by accident (ricochet), the very fact that no harm was intended, coupled with the circumstances of having to defend himself using the only means available in the face of rioters, meant that neither occurrence rose to the level of being a crime. Jeopardizing John's health, his job and income loss, and his confinement were unjust—even if the sentence was shortened. How could his supporters be content that John was abused by a wayward or even satanic justice system bent on pleasing bloodthirsty leftists and drunken

scoundrels lauded by the Chilean press?

The people who corralled John and threatened him were hardly just nice young people having fun at the beach one fine, cool Spring afternoon. They had come together in a show of force to destroy Reñaca. The judges got it wrong: his staged retreat—instead of running off in panic as potential assailants might have him in their sights—was a reasonable course of action rather than one of an enraged madman. That John had the self-control not to fire—except when closed in upon by Valdés trying to pull him from his pickup or others hurling stones or other objects at him from close range—were evidence that he did not fire in a fit of rage but rather in self-defense. Preserving one's life and property from aggression are fundamental rights that are also upheld by biblical principles found in Luke 22:35-38, Acts 7:23-24, 1 Corinthians 7:20-23, Proverbs 24:11, Esther 8:13 and 9:1, Nehemiah 4:17-18 and elsewhere. Rather than provoke aggression, he had been aggressed. He went not looking for trouble; trouble came to him. Public policy may have criminalized the actions and results of self-defense but it could not make such actions morally wrong; only God could, and He didn't. John, therefore, had not sinned and had a clean conscience before God and men. He was being punished for "doing good" (1 Peter 2:19-20)—following biblical principles. Furthermore, the lower court had also used his right to remain silent as evidence against him, which the Supreme Court chastised in its ruling. However, instead of freeing John, the judges had incorrectly replaced attempted murder charges with lesser crimes based on foul public policy. That was wrong!

Public policy cannot make something right or wrong; only God can. Consider, for example, that abortion is not morally right because the Chinese government says it is, any more than chattel slavery of Blacks was right, and helping them escape wrong, because certain Nineteenth Century governments said it was. The same is true for Twentieth Century governments that declared killing Jews and Gypsies to be right and hiding them wrong, not to mention slaughtering Armenians, Hutus, and any number of other beleaguered races. Even if in general people should obey "every ordinance of man" (1 Peter 2:13), that commandment cannot be absolute—and evil public policy must in fact be resisted by good men. John had violated bad public policy and was bearing the consequences, but that did not mean he had done anything wrong. Moreover, he was convicted by ideologically driven prosecutors and lying witnesses who used the Chilean courts to assail their political adversary. Knowledge of these things further emblazoned John's supporters. The issue at hand was bigger than John himself; it touched the very fabric of civilization and its institutions. Either human beings had natural rights and could defend them or society would fall into arbitrary rule of autocratic men who base justice on the whims and fancies of the masses. John's case exemplified the battle between good and evil in the world, as well as the current triumph of the horde of leftists and rabble rousers.

Curiously, the attitudes and reactions to John's reduced sentence differed widely between those who knew and supported John in prison and those who did without. Both saw the tremendous injustice of the Chilean justice system, but the former welcomed the ruling with glee and a triumphant attitude, while the latter viewed it as insufficient, provoking feelings of anger and consternation. Those inside prison saw the ruling achieved through the public defender's team as something just shy of a miracle, since that team was often thought to fail, as Delfín pointed out, usually cutting some back-office deal-making with the prosecutor, wherein only those defendants with money could expect to succeed. In John's case, the public defenders were unhappy with the decision, too, wanting to have attained further sentence reduction. Guillermo Améstica finally

admitted that the decision was in large measure political. David Zúñiga, like Améstica, Undurraga, and Fierro, lamented that the Court did not recognize that firing in public was exempt from sanction since defensive actions like John's occurring under extreme threat fell under code section 10, paragraph 11.

Yet the people in *cana* knew little about such legal technicalities. They saw underhanded arrangements, legal maneuvering, deception, selfish ambition, love of money and power, and lying witnesses as commonplace—all leading to injustice. Somehow John and his legal team had found a way to mitigate that injustice and that fact was cause for celebration and thanksgiving to God. John was a “hero” but in a different sense than his supporters outside considered him to be. They had seen most cases go down in flames before the Supreme Court. Miami and Rubén knew of no one who had had their sentences reduced by that Court. Ismael and Jorge had known some, but reductions were not common—especially those which reduced an overall sentence by nearly half. Only ignorant people outside of prison believed the romantic vision of the state and its judicial branch. *Reos* and *machucados* knew that the judiciary was full of injustice and for anyone to escape it—even partially—was a tremendous feat. Miami said it was equivalent to an important soccer victory that captivated the entire country.

In fact, it was the talk of the *patio* the next morning. For nearly everyone, John represented hope for prisoners. Miami had petitioned the Supreme Court for three years to hear his case without response but John had gotten a hearing quickly and won. It was a memorable achievement for all those tangled in the web of Chilean justice, generating hope because it created jurisprudence that would now be important for all cases with public connotation and notoriety. As a “famous” delinquent, John had set a new standard. Indeed, the case even benefitted all those who were serving sentences based on arbitrary convictions. For Miami and many others who knew the system, and lawyers like Fabiola García, the mere elimination of the serious attempted murder charges opened up a wide range of opportunities to serve John’s sentence with an alternative punishment outside of being confined in a prison. He was no longer considered a danger to society.

Such achievements were nothing short of monumental in the *reos’* minds—especially given the media’s hatred for John and tremendous coverage of his case. Once the sentence reduction was announced, the media reported it furiously, resulting in many leftists commenting on how corrupt and unjust the system was to let John off so lightly. “He should have been punished for even more years,” they said. Once again, John was the focus of all Chile, and the ire of the Left was starting to boil over. One could see the conflict of political and perhaps religious Worldviews erupting on account of John’s case. Some of Pamela’s centrist cousins from near Concepción and long-time friends from Osorno called her to congratulate her for her husband achieving a more reasonable sentence, but the hard Left would have none of that thinking and the hard Right agreed, albeit for diametrically opposed reasons. Yet the Court could not set John free lest by doing so it set a precedent for other libertarians and rightists to repeat what John did. The last thing the Chilean state wanted was for such people to defend their lives and property against communists and leftists. And therein lied the root of the political nature of John’s case. Thus, for the prisoner and those related to the judicial process, the Supreme Court decision represented an inconceivable triumph. Sure, they knew the reduction in sentence should have been even greater than it was, but they still viewed what was achieved as nothing short of stunning. Miami was among the amazed and was even perturbed with John until he understood the view of those

supporters without the prison. In an uncanny way, both sides concurred with respect to the injustice possessing the Chilean criminal justice system, but the ruling itself generated different emotions and attitudes—both of which were understandable and reasonable.

That evening, Chilean television and radio stations carried John's Supreme Court decision as a top story. Leftists continued to condemn Chilean criminal justice for not sentencing him to more years. Down on the *patio* the next day, John's case also continued to dominate conversations. Some of the *machucados* were literally boasting about the fact that they got their picture taken with John. Next they would be asking for his autograph! The adulation was so great that it was stifling. There were reenactments of John shooting in self-defense on November 10, 2020, and John play-acted his part in order to amuse them—correcting Michael's errors in movement. Michael then appeared in the dining room, with his mouth running as fast as ever, joking about the case and lauding gunman John in the process. "Who is more important and famous in Chile today, famous soccer star Alexis Sánchez or me?" John asked. Without hesitation, and in all candor—without even flinching—soccer-buff Michael said that John was. John was greeted, too, with gleeful shouts of triumph from an admirer looking out one of 114's hallway windows. Ditto for the night guard who took a headcount around 6:30 p.m. and congratulated John, noting that his sentence would have been less if he had just killed some of the communist and leftist aggressors—a common viewpoint among the *gendarmes*. Delfín was amazed still by the outcome, basically telling John to count his blessings. Most offered their opinions and advice. John was literally the talk of the town.

Even Castro greeted John in the morning with congratulations, as he opened his cell door, asking John if he was pleased. John told him, "Not entirely; we are working on one other possibility with the Constitutional Court and also to transfer me to a prison in Europe." He inquired where, but John did not understand him at first. (When diction-challenged Castro said *cárcel* it sounded like *casa* to John.) Eventually, John explained that the destination prison system was in Italy. Castro then showed his usual stunned look that occurs whenever his brain receives too much out-of-the-ordinary information, too fast. John did not see him again for the rest of the day.

Ignorant Marino babbled some largely doltish and incoherent nonsense while trying to explain why John was guilty and should be grateful. John realized, as did the others present, that it was not worth trying to interact with him. Cristián also tried to get John to be more appreciative of the sentence reduction but at the same time saw the injustice, saying that he would have responded the same way if he were placed in the same situation—corralled in his vehicle. Ismael made few comments but Rubén found it quite amusing that John had been jailed for murdering a car by ricochet. Car killers were not too common; once again Chile was trailblazing virgin territory by targeting "expert car killers," leading the world with legal insight and innovation. Moroni also thought John would have been happy and seemed surprised he was not entirely overjoyed. Miami had finally gotten the larger picture in view, understanding how people on the outside could see things differently than those on the inside, as well as comprehending that John's case was bigger than John. It was all part of the unfolding story that could end up having a larger impact on Chile and alleviate the wrongful suffering of others.

Chapter XIX You Could Have No Power at All

For John, the Supreme Court decision was analogous to a consolation prize. He definitely did not win or place because he remained unfree. But he was thrown some pretty big bones as gestures of consolation. John could not deny that fact, of course. Yet, he could not win—or even place—because the Supreme Court ultimately had to at least partially gratify the visceral desires of the vocal Left, seething with venom and hatred for John. There was no impartiality in judging the case, nor was there a serious review of the facts presented at the lower-court trial. Miami explained, “Court rulings in Chile are always handed down for the benefit of the gallery of people watching the spectacle—just as the ancient Romans watched the gladiators and Caesar gave either a thumbs up or thumbs down. It was still bread and circuses, with rulings designed to satisfy the visceral desires you mentioned, John, while still trying to maintain the façade of national and international professionalism and respectability.” He also pointed out that Supreme Court justices were political animals that were not above repaying the leftist Senate that confirmed three of them or, in the case of the two lawyers integrated into the bench, the Minister of Justice who appointed the other two. Surely Minister Larraín and the communist and socialist Senators would have been calling in favors in order to please their constituents in a case as big and contentious as John’s.

The message the Supreme Court sent was clear: if you defend your life, or anyone else’s life, in Chile with a firearm you will go to prison for six years, where you will soon learn that it would have been better to simply have let the assailants kill you. The arbitrary ruling given will not entail judges carefully reconsidering the facts, and the judicial system will make a public spectacle of you, the “gladiator,” for all to see. John certainly thought and felt that such was indicative of “the Chilean way.” Moreover, John had been unhealthy. While reading in the bright sun, his vision was still marred by floating splotches, yet he noticed that his right eye had fewer blemishes than his left, perhaps marking some improvement. One element that clearly comprised part of “the Chilean way” was to deny prisoners adequate health care and clean nutrition. John had decided to cut back a little on eating what Pamela was sending him, especially since Miami kept commenting on the reemergence of John’s gut. While John walked his normal course each morning, he had capped his daily bedframe pushups and twists at 100 apiece. Plus, Miami had been doing his bathroom cleaning task sometimes (without John asking him to do so) in order to ensure that John got a very good conduct score—especially when Castro was on duty—while maximizing his time collecting information for his book. All told, John’s exercise and physical activity level left something to be desired. Being in jail was not good for John’s health. Neither were the leftist Chilean mass media or biased and politicized courtrooms.

At least more Chileans than ever before could now see evidence of what John had taught them for years: the state is satanic—just as the Bible teaches (Luke 4:6-7; Revelation 19:19; etc.). State actors and their leftist brainwashed minions had transformed John into Chile’s most famous criminal. If you were a lawyer would you defend John? Some were scared to do so, while many others dedicated some of their time to doing exactly that. John was, as always, truly grateful for all the support. Every *gendarme* he saw was also congratulatory, not to mention every prisoner.

Even new 118-prisoner Leonardo León Solís (69), a history professor, agreed. He had just transferred in from 103, along with Cristián, an Evangelical from 111, who had been with him in

109. Both were, according to Alexis, legitimate Christians. Thus, Sunday services would be starting up again in 118. León, a gray-haired communist who was exiled to England by the Pinochet government, living there fifteen years and eventually speaking English well, was excited to meet John. “I was hoping I could move in with you,” he said. He also said that despite being a communist he thought that John had gotten a raw deal, based on degenerate media bias and injustice. John was sure that he would have much to discuss with León about the inconsistency and impossibility of being a Christian and a communist, and was not a little surprised by his support. Out of the corner of his eye, John saw the gallery of *machucados*, including new *rancheros* from 101 and 102 just arrived, listening to John and León talk in English as they walked twenty laps before headcount formation. In reality, Miami alone was not mesmerized by the show. Of course, the *reos*’ marveling should not have come as a surprise. How many of them ever came across such English-speaking in their crime-ridden neighborhoods and hangouts?

There were lots of other changes in 118 besides the new arrivals—most of whom now were assigned by Castro to live with the invalids in 118A. Rubén moved downstairs to cell number 10, which John and Mauricio had occupied for months, and newcomer Miguel—now cleared of Covid-19 by a negative result on his PCR test—was reassigned to the San Felipe prison an hour north of Santiago. Ismael and Pato had finished fixing up cell number 11 across the stairwell from Rubén’s new den and next door to John and Alexis’. John was, in the meantime, sitting in the dining room answering questions that a couple *pacos* had about pistols and firearms purchasing connections, and inquiring about how he might get into a halfway house (*CET*)—now that he was no longer classified as a murderer. Well, he had actually murdered a Hyundai car, and he did shoot in public, accidentally wounding an assailant in the thigh. But he figured that those things would not qualify him as being a dangerous criminal and thus suitable for a halfway house. One of the *pacos* concurred. He was one of those ex-military guys who was especially supportive of John. He would help him get to the halfway house, where John would enjoy considerably greater freedom and be able to work while awaiting transfer to Italy or, in the case of a triumph in the Constitutional Court, moving to home arrest.

In other news, the *módulo* was a little less chipper since Cristián had to stop doing tattoos for lack of ink and other needed materials. He was mad at his live-in girlfriend, mother of their newborn boy he had never met, since she would not put the supplies in an *encomienda* sack for him—especially because he was sending her his earnings to support the child. He admired Pamela’s faithfulness to John, remarking about it over a few games of chess where John was teaching him to play. Then he went to help clean out the barber room for newcomer Cristián, removing his tattooing equipment for the time being. Miami and John ate pizza one while everyone else was off doing other things. They talked about religion and John pointed out, in response to Miami’s inquiry, that all Christendom’s adherents were not exactly children of the same God, even though they all did good works, given that Roman Catholics believed that salvation was obtained partly by merit rather than by grace through faith alone. There were some key differences like that, not to mention the Catholic view that purgatory could be used to burn off remaining sins. Miami was a Catholic who thought that purgatory was invented by some wily and astute showmen rather than serious faithful Christians. John said that Jesus died once for the sin of all his elect. All their sins were paid for at the cross. Good works were required as a sign of true salvation but merited none of it. He also touted Baptists as being the only major Christian branch that had many adherents (at least historically) who wanted nothing to do with placing the

evil, satanic state into Christian service or to help make men more moral. Miami had little trouble liking that view given the evils he had seen in Chilean crony capitalism, state corruption, and its unjust judicial system. He later dropped off the onion and tomato John needed to make *guacamole*, but John forgot to ask him to bring a lemon. At least he had some artificial lemon juice to use.

Michael was so impacted by hearing the English conversation the day before that he ran out to meet John and walk along with him the next morning, babbling noises and play-acting like he was responding to John in English. Yet John was more impacted by other things. The back part of his molar, that already had a hole in the front part, broke off and was accidentally swallowed. His health would not improve while in prison; that was hardly a surprise. But the *reos* continued to flatter and stroke his ego, which suffered no illness, saying, too, that he was *de pana* (one who does good for others), treating him like some Hollywood star for his Supreme Court “victory.” He truly had no desire to be adulated and tried to make sure that God received the glory for whatever good or fame that came his way. Too, there was no church service to glorify the One who did deserve it, however, since Cristián (the Evangelical) took on many haircut appointments instead. He had agreed to participate in a 10 a.m. service but once the work started to roll in for him, he lost interest. John was surprised after having heard him preach so much in 109.

Instead, John answered myriad questions that Leonardo León posed. Turns out he was converted to Christ his first night in 103 when he was 65—shortly after being accused of sexually molesting one of his female university students. He had not completed his undergraduate degree, yet was admitted somehow to graduate school in London, earning his doctorate. John was shocked to hear that such a thing was possible in the West, but apparently communist exiles get special privileges. But León was a changed man, and mostly had religion on his mind. “What’s the difference between Baptists and Pentecostals or Protestants,” he asked, since he had known no other religion besides Pentecostalism. John replied, “Baptists do not baptize infants, have no church hierarchy beyond the local church, and believe in the complete separation of church and state.” On the last point, he stated that historic Baptists did not rely on the state to bring people to church or to make them moral or to sin less. In reality, he gave León a lot of information to chew on—including debunking the idea that revelatory and miraculous spiritual gifts were still active today (as Pentecostals believe). León would only be on the *patio* Sundays due to his prison job, so he only had one day a week to talk to John. He also told John about some of the problems and virtues with 103, and along with his friend from 103, Gabriel (now in 118A as a *ranchero*), invited John to go to 103’s worship service on the following Sunday. The two men talked about León’s research into Mapuche Indians and other motifs, as well, some of the time with *Cabo* Mario Salas, who came to the *patio*. As a result, John got little reading done, skipped his Italian morning study, and only played and won four games of chess (against Rubén, Ricardo, and Alejandro), while León and Miami watched. That afternoon, John and Valentín led the Historic Baptists Zoomcast.

A *paco* John had never met congratulated him during the next morning’s lineup, just as Pancho did the stairwell the day before. One would think that John had won some major televised contest; his fame had spread far and wide. Michael and Cristián kept stoking the flames of fame, too, recounting after breakfast the blessings of what happened in the Supreme Court ruling, the latter saying that if John were ever attacked or bothered by such people after his release, he could tell them that they should leave him alone since he had paid the price for his error. John said he

would never feel the need to tell people he committed an error. He had “done good,” defending himself against assailants—no matter what Chilean public policy decreed against him. “Any leader has to be prepared to suffer the consequences of his right actions.” Cristián agreed that John had been attacked but said that both he and the assailants belonged in jail. John realized his teaching on self-defense had not penetrated the young supposed-robber-really-sexabuser’s skull. He was to have more intellectual success with other men, however. León caught up with John before going off to his quasi-slave labor, walking along with him and then telling him (in English) that it was likely that he would be taken to 103 now that he was finally convicted.

John hoped he was mistaken, and just read his novel, plus did his usual routine of Italian study, four chess victories (over Rubén and Ismael), giving away part of his sandwiches and other candy or food to happy recipients. The only thing is that some of them had to eat his *guacamole*-meat-cheese burritos cold because the power had been cut since around 10 a.m., along with the well (rattainted) water. Against Ismael’s prognostication of both being out until 6 p.m., both came back on at 1:20 p.m. (John had earlier suggested that they wait to eat the burritos until 1:30 p.m. but Ismael convinced everyone not to delay—he had just finished working out at 1:10 p.m. and was hungry and impatient.) The power outage caused other small griefs, too. Rubén had just (temporarily) set up his new smart television in the dining room, and had put on a shoot’em-up movie, fifteen minutes prior to the power going off. No one had any idea why it was cut, of course.

Moreover, there was a crisis once again with drinking water, juice, and beverages still not being available at the kiosks. John was fortunate to have a three-liter bottle of Canada Dry Ginger Ale Light from *encomienda*, whereas others ran out the day before, but even he would run out by dinnertime. So he boiled a couple liters of rat-tainted water just in case. Miami, always thinking of John’s well-being, brought him a couple of kids’ juice boxes. “That’s all I could get my hands on,” he said. He had also done John’s bathroom cleaning duty to maintain John’s good conduct score—although there was little to do with the water being shut off, leaving the *machucados* in 118A unable to shower. “If everything else you are trying fails, John, at least you will be able to get out on parole next year with good conduct.” Not only Miami was in a giving mood. Alexis offered John a half-drunk bottle of fizzy water and a hard-boiled egg, which John gratefully received. Marcelo brought Alexis and John a couple of large bananas, also gratefully received. Pamela’s Uber driver Andrés had gotten a couple English-language novels through *encomienda*—although the whacky guard only let through half of the normal tortilla supply (who knows why) and prohibited the *medialunas* (pastries like sweet-coated croissants). If it were not for León jabbering with John, he would have finished *A Prayer for Owen Meany* by now and been on to one of these new books, *The Book Thief* by Markus Dusan or *American Vertigo* by BernardHenry Lévy. Pamela was too focused on her Italian study and supplemental class on Saturday to make the trip to the jail. She also had exams at the end of this coming week (with visitation scheduled with John on the morning of the first exam day), plus a doctor’s appointment to evaluate her kidney tumor a couple days prior. She had more stress than usual. God was testing her through it all.

The wife of John ’s former star student Gino, an orthodontist, had diagnosed his broken molar as best she could from new images that Alexis had shot of John’s mouth. Since there was no dentist in prison to do the work she recommended, all John could do was follow her advice to keep food out of his molar in order to avoid infection. There was no further word on the options to get John

to a freer place either. In the meantime, John and Bob were planning on the printing of the first volume of this book, *Llevando la Cruz*, and its delivery to Chile, while Valentín was slowly but surely advancing in the correction of the Spanish version of John's other book, *Padeciendo Injustamente*. For fun, Miami continued to pick John's brain, noting that John was a truly odd mix of a serious, committed Christian (Baptist) and a serious economics and public policy scholar, both leading to libertarian activism. He found that mix fascinating, almost like a double personality, but John assured him that the logical congruence of both things was woven together at the heart level, where both cohabited happily. God had prepared him for his special task in life.

Thus, John continued to share information and theory with Miami that caused him to realize that, besides Satan himself, the state is and has been mankind's worst enemy—either directly or by empowering rapacious and parasitic mega-corporations. The conversation was so far above the *machucados'* heads (even Pentecostal Luchito got up and left the table after devouring a half of one of John's turkey and cheese with *guacamole* sandwiches), that they seemed like little kids interrupting "mama" Miami, attempting to get some attention or need met, oblivious to the fact that serious matters were being discussed. John noticed that Cristián (the Evangelical Pentecostal who preferred to cut hair on Sundays) was trying to listen in as best he could from the other table, but even his attentiveness eventually petered out. Part of the problem might have been Miami repeating his story (for the fourth time in six months) about giving his new leather jacket to the rich Texan who lavished cash and a free week in Las Vegas on him and his other crew members, but the pilot aborted their plans, worried about what the Admiral might think. It was then that John realized that Miami lacked life experiences. He needed to augment his inventory of stories. Hopefully that dearth would be remedied in coming years when, as Miami said, "The burdens and griefs of our present would be transformed into the captivating and funny tales from our past."

Would the little things be remembered as well? Packing up in the dining hall to go upstairs, and the rituals entailed in arriving in one's cell, were about as repetitive and monotonous as packing the backpack and heading downstairs in the morning. For John, the chess set and reading book got put away first, then his towel and plasticware drying in the sun got collected and put away, and all remaining food was given away or eaten. Perishable items put in the freezer that morning were taken out, as well the frozen food from Pamela, which had been put into individual day's containers (holding that evening's supper), and any purchases made at the kiosks (via Sergio), were packed away. The backpack is then strapped on, followed by his plastic armchair, along with placing whatever did not fit inside the backpack on the seat, being carried upstairs. Once in the cell, the backpack's plasticware is unpacked, so it can be refilled with food that evening, and anything lacking is replaced: salt, toilet paper, etc. When necessary, a recently-finished reading book is replaced with another. The backpack is subsequently hung on its designated bolt next to the door. John then washes his hands and brushes his teeth, takes his vitamins, puts his pajamas on, puts his dirty laundry in a plastic bag hanging at the foot of his bed, lies on his bunk, gets his technology reassembled and ready, afterwards taking his blood pressure for good measure (116/62 that day), then puts his eye drops in, reads a Bible passage, records that day's chess statistics, writes a little more in his book, and finally falls asleep for his nap. Was that routine even worth remembering?

The next day had been a long one for John, not only because of Michael and Cristián's continued

babbling about his fame, and Cristián and several others relishing over his sandwiches and other goodies—all while beating Rubén and Cristián in five chess matches—but also because of his teaching load. Miami, like León and Carlos that morning, had an insatiable craving for new information. Today, he posed a huge academic question about property rights in land and the Chilean Indians (mainly *Mapuches* in the south-central part of the country). They had been violently expropriating land from “immigrants” who had legally bought and recorded land titles, wherein many were burned-out, shot, or killed. The weak Piñera government was doing little about it. John discussed some of the principal problems and theories with respect to property rights in land, including John Locke’s mixing one’s labor with the soil, allodialism (absolute rights in real property—not subject to taxation or regulation), feudalism, and how conquest has been allowed to be definitive in transferring property rights, thus excluding any claims the *Mapuches* might have. It was not a pretty answer, any more than eminent domain, judicial decrees, or regulatory “takings” are under democratic societies, but it has so far been the prevailing model. Miami, like John, and the relatively few scholars who understood the theory, had to be content with the fact that Western Civilization is still feudal, with states having replaced kings as the sole allodiaries. Unlike rights to personal property, “rights” to real property are actually no more than strong contractual privileges to use and possess it—that can be terminated by nonpayment of the taxes due on it or non-compliance with the norms set down by the allodiar. Rubén tried without much success to keep up with some of the thinking, but Miami seemed to grasp it well. He was continuing his formal education in jail! Once again, John found that his conduct-scorebased bathroom cleaning task had been completed for him. Miami was kind and bright enough to see where it was best to put John’s resources to use, which certainly precluded him working as a janitor whenever possible.

Civilization ceases to exist without property rights, especially one’s property in the food and drink that keeps him alive. In prison, the free market for beverages had prevailed despite their recent short supply. Upon hearing of John’s need to drink something, market actors went to work to satisfy the demand. As a result, John gave tips that amounted to a 33% price premium for Luís to bring him a couple 1.6-liter bottles of apple-flavored water, a 1.5-liter bottle of sugary Sprite, and the same-sized bottle of Valle apple juice (mixed with artificial and natural sweeteners that were perhaps a slight upgrade over rat taint). It was all Luís could find after running to and fro to see what was available. No beverage deliveries had been made to the penitentiary. Nevertheless, John now had enough to drink for the next couple of days. He reflected that, “Prison was much like an island, with a limited supply of goods coming from the mainland to meet the insatiable needs of three thousand people deprived of liberty and living in deplorable conditions.” The beverage supply was tenuous and precarious, depending on the whims and fancies of the *gendarmes* themselves—much like those of Necúlman and Cisternas, who had again (thankfully) taken long pauses in their English lessons.

Some officers had come to 118 to discuss problems with some of the *reos*, mainly those in 118A, but John did not get a chance to talk with them about getting him to a *CET*. Moisés said that the only *CET* with openings was in Putaendo—a rural town of 15,500 inhabitants at least two (maybe close to three) hours northeast of Viña del Mar by city bus—a little less time if traveling from Santiago. If Moisés was right, John would probably be quite safe there compared to communist-ridden Valparaíso, but would probably have poor internet connectivity, too. John had no idea how tightly controlled his life might be there but figured it would be far less so than the penitentiary. But Pamela would have more difficulty coming to visit him—even though by

present circumstances the hassle would only be once or twice a month. The same troubles would affect all other visitors, although less so for those with vehicles. Would he ever get there at all? John had no news from his free-market attempt to get there by greasing the skids, and Fabiola was opposed to the idea of paying guards to move him. There was no other word on other options for partial release either, other than that David Zúñiga was still working on the Italian-transfer option, which had to be crafted in such a way to get approved by the undersecretary of current Minister of Justice Larraín.

Chapter XX Not by Might nor by Power

The next morning 's lineup featured only twelve *reos* and Castro, pointing his scrawny finger at John and others, telling them to put on their anti-Covid-19 masks. John was nonplussed and unhappy with the order. Miami later whispered, "Two master chefs heading up *rancho* in some part of the prison (apparently different from where Alexis worked) had come in contact with some of the men in 118B, after coming into work from their homes in town." Consequently, the whole of 118B was quarantined for two weeks, including *machucados* Michael, Sergio, Moisés, Alejandro, and even hapless Mauricio (who also had to endure the smoke and inconvenience from feckless Jorge's fire after Castro moved him out of 118). That left the *patio* with only five *reos* during the day—after the sycophants and woodworkers went into the building—at least until 1 p.m. when the *machucados* filed out to (apparently) begin their PCR testing. With all the welcomed quiet, John started reading *American Vertigo*, as well as beating Ismael once (the other game ending in a draw) and Rubén thrice in chess. Pamela, having received a cautiously optimistic doctor's report about her tiny kidney tumor the day before, was off buying John's medicines, eyeglass cleaner, and the disinfecting mouth rinse and tooth patching cement that Gino's wife had prescribed. The line at the Salcobrand pharmacy was long, and the errand boring, as usual. She would leave it all at the *gendarme* service window the next day, along with some cash and a copy of his college diplomas, before visitation began.

Meanwhile, the psychologist called Miami away to interview him. His name had come up in the *gendarmería* system automatically, having nearly completed one-half of his eight-year sentence, which showed that he was eligible for parole in April or May. She asked him if he recognized his crime and he gave her an earful of denials and rhetoric about the failed system that had jailed him unjustly. Thus, she would likely write up a negative report, causing his parole to be initially denied by the Appeals Court. John thought so, too. However, his parole would likely be approved on appeal (as it usually was for other *reos* that had to appeal) by the lone appeal judge—who worked appeal cases by himself. Miami had not petitioned for parole, after all; the judicial system had automatically started the process based on his stellar conduct and time served. Rather than collapse on itself after repeated tries every six months, Miami thought the system would likely let him go and he was pleased as punch. "I will bring over your *encomienda* every week, John, so Pamela does not have to be bothered," he said. He would then begin the fight to clear his name and restore his reputation.

He was also still shell-shocked by the previous day 's lecture on property rights theory he heard from John. It had been a life-changing moment for him, as he saw himself and others still bound by feudal shackles even though the lord paramount's and manorial terms had changed. The states of the world, along with their parasitic, oft-disguised nobility, had adapted and learned to optimize their take from commoners under democracy. Yet, there was an alternative. All real property (land and things attached to it), whether in solid, liquid, or gaseous form, could be owned privately, absolutely. Doing so would allow the free market to automatically allocate resources to their highest use value and put a price tag on environmental abuse, pollution, or sea creature and wildlife dilapidation. Allodialism would thus facilitate healthy "untrammeled" capitalism and its resulting economic prosperity for all, while minimizing crony capitalism and one group benefitting at the expense of another via state power. Miami saw that much real property—especially the air and seas—was left without a designated owner, leading to conflicts

and the tragedy of the commons. What land was owned, acquired by conquest or decree from some ancient “Christian” monarch in the West and passed down to modern states, was doled out to mighty friends who, in turn, sold off parcels to common men that improved the property and provided an endless stream of income to the *real* owners masked by states. Modern feudalism had served as a convenient means of wealth extraction and control, while beguiling the supposed “landowners” into believing that their position was now greater than it was during Roman times, the Middle Ages, and down through early Nineteenth Century Europe. Miami now knew the truth. He could also see why controlling more territory resulted in diminishing returns at some point. It was much more profitable for a powerful allodiciary, like the one atop America (with its nearly invincible, superlative armed forces), to dominate other smaller ones, placing them into economic vassalage. Once again, Miami could see how the state was the greatest antisocial institution in existence. Places like Hong Kong, Singapore, early America, and even Switzerland (along with European enclaves like Andorra and San Marino) would thrive and prosper under limited state control and, at least in early America, with quasi-allodial conditions. Most other peoples and smaller firms bore the full force and “milking” actions of parasitic states. Moreover, feudal slavery, similar in many respects to communism, was no more apparent than inside Chilean penitentiaries, and the parasitic, biased, and even corrupt judicial system that fed them. Chile needed a jury system fast in order to combat the unchecked power of mendacious prosecutors, so often driven by evil and selfish ambition—as was the case of left-winger Paola Rojas, who used her power and comradery with her judge pals to condemn John. Prosecutors were uncannily similar to the sheriffs hired by the old English nobility to keep commoners in check. A modern-day Robin Hood was needed to stop them. Would he arise?

John continued to show his “odd” mix of skills. On the one hand, he was an economics and public policy professor and scholar. On the other hand, he was a Baptist preacher and quasi-theologian providing spiritual counsel. Both things came together in his pro-life libertarian activism that Pamela loved in theory but hated in practice. The consequences for doing good, doing right, and standing up against evil came with a high price, wherein the payoff was still unseen and unpredictable for a woman beleaguered by still unseen and unpredictable for a woman beleaguered by year-old father. Like so many others who supported John, Valentín had firmly gotten what Pamela still struggled to grasp, and their zeal emblazoned them in the fight set before them. Now Miami was in the same boat, more advanced intellectually than even the brighter *reos*. “You are never going to be reconciled with your sentence, are you John?,” Ismael asked. Rubén answered for him: “How could he be when his sentence was unjust—no matter how much it was shortened?” John considered himself to be a political prisoner, sentenced by cowardly judges who succumbed to the visceral hatred of the Chilean masses, leftist politicians, and media that pressured and impelled them.

Furthermore, he found himself having to fight off bouts of sadness that began to appear after lawyers Améstica, Fierro, and Undurraga decided to hang up their hats and not appeal to the Constitutional Court, leaving John with a permanent sentence of six years, twenty-six days. Now he had to hope that the “pardon law” (*ley indulto*) would pass the Chilean Congress and, in the meantime, consider his options for parole or early-release benefits. He continued to acquire and assimilate information about getting into a *CET*, wherein a supporter might arrange to offer John a job (with the *CET* creating a position and getting a commission). It would be such an unusual undertaking, that it was unclear it would work. The other option was getting transferred to an Italian jail. With all the hassles of an international move that would be foisted upon Pamela,

doing so would certainly benefit John's living conditions and possibly accelerate his parole, making the move more palatable. If the goal was to increase John's safety, maximize his potential income and old-age pension, minimize the couple's danger from violent Chilean leftists, avoid circumstances where John might be charged again—with the severe consequences that having a criminal record entail—for defending himself, improve John's prison food and medical and dental care, then going to Italy made the most sense. The only thing looking good about Chile at that moment was the copper price, which had just pushed over four dollars a pound. It was one of the richest periods in the Chilean copper industry's history, causing significant spillover effects. Otherwise the economy was reeling from fascist Covid-19 restrictions, as were social interactions, and violence in the south-central portion of the country indicated that every other place was on the verge of exploding again, too. The feudal rulers were certainly doing nothing to stem the violence. Their fascist policies were more concerned with fining people who did not wear masks or who "illicitly" met for worship or birthday parties than to quell arsonists. These and other terrorists had been trying to conquer real property in south-central Chile by evicting or killing their "owners," not to mention burning up trucks passing through the Ninth Region. A new Constitution would be adopted in two years that would likely favor socialism and communism, along with left-fashionable politically correct ideologies. Like Miami, John and Pamela had to ask themselves if Chile really had a bright future at all and why would they want to live there if they had the option not to? Italy was certainly no paradise but, compared to what Chile might become, it might be a real improvement. The emotional weight on both John and Pamela was significant. Unlike some of their quieter, behind-the-scenes supporters, they did not get to enjoy a summer vacation in Zapallar (a wealthy beach resort an hour north of Reñaca). Those who were valiant for truth and doing good were destined to suffer at times.

Indeed, Pamela was not sleeping as much due to her Italian studies and sundry regular activities—not the least of which entailed caring for her valiant-for-truth, Historic Baptist, Libertarian "leader" and "hero" husband in jail. She lacked nothing, but felt insecure and feared poverty as she was getting older. Yet the facts of her feared condition and fate were quite different, and—besides the expected marital affection (without required Covid-19 masks)—John tried to console her during the next day's scheduled visitation that they now had more friends and contacts than ever, and that their support continued to be adequate. The future was looking bright for both political activism in Chile and employment, not to mention publishing and selling his books along with continuing Christian ministry. His faith in Christ and God's Providence driving his life was strong, and he encouraged her to have the same confidence. Still, being married to John was not easy, even if he provided her knowledge and experiences that made her life interesting. She faced a lot of stress. Accordingly, as usual, she had arrived forty-five minutes late, mainly because she overslept, although some of the delay was due to getting John's medications and money turned into the *gendarme* service window before the visit started. There was a huge line to get in, too, by the time she arrived. Little did she know that inside the hall, both Cristiáns, John, León, Ricardo, Marcelo, Aníbal, Marino, Angelino, and several other *reos* had been called over and were working to mop up a small flood in the visiting area prior to their visitors arriving. Thus, visitation started a little late (10:15 a.m.) and *Cabo Montecino* (in charge of 118 that day) did not call it to an end until 12:30 p.m., so Pamela's tardiness did not have its usual effect. The funds, Listerine, and toothbrushes she brought were delivered to John immediately after visitation; the rest would likely arrive in 118 the next day. She could not get John's diplomas to the proper people, however, since that window was closed. She would call

the social assistant to find out alternatives. Maybe they would accept emailed copies? A “very good” conduct score was impossible to earn without proof of high school graduation or better, making the task important to complete.

John also gave Pamela a letter to the Italian Consul in Valparaíso asking for the help he had promised in December 2019 once John was convicted and sentenced. They would apparently handle the legal maneuvers needed to apply the Strasbourg Accords and get him transferred to an Italian jail and perhaps more. David Zúñiga was simultaneously working the Ministry of Justice angle. At the same time, John had been pursuing internal means within the *gendarmería* in order to get sent to a halfway house as quickly as possible. The best way he could help Pamela was to start earning money again and have the freedom to handle the couple’s financial and personal affairs. A *CET* would likely provide that means, and might even lead to a superior option than going to Italy. John’s friend Bob already had a managerial position in mind for him, importing and distributing low-cost housing kits, which could probably be started while John was at the *CET*—so long as the *gendarmes* accepted it and would receive their cut of John’s pay. There was still a lot of leg work to be done to make either Italy or *CET* a reality but at least the wheels were turning.

Back at 118, John had no time to read, but he did discuss these two options with Miami and Rubén to some extent, whooping the latter twice in chess while they talked and ate John’s ham and cheese sandwiches, chips, cookies, and candies. Miami also had some further questions about title emission under allodialism, which John expounded along with several other practical points pertaining to the theory: automatic and efficient resource allocation, automatic satisfaction of personal or lifestyle preferences, constitutionally limiting the state by not allowing it to be an allodiary, and the use of restrictive covenants and other voluntary contracts to constrain behavior and optimize possession and use. Allodial policy was in some sense utopian, in that it would be hard to implement so long as a powerful elite controlled real property (even under democracies where majorities and favored sons stomp on the preferences of minorities and hapless competitors), but it was nice for Miami and the others to know that a policy solution to many of the world’s problems engendered by modern feudal states did actually exist.

Necúlmán was in charge of 118 the next day, having returned from a six-week vacation east of Temuco, and had an English class with John after the *reos* returned to their cells. He also brought John a much-desired, full-size bottle of soy sauce. That item was very much appreciated! With so few men on the *patio*, not a whole lot went on in 118. John read a chapter of *American Vertigo*, otherwise beating Rubén four times in chess and Necúlmán three times. For some reason or another, John’s medications did not arrive, and he had run out of a few of them. (That was a bit worrisome.) Daniel, regularly privileged with candies from John, was scheduled to be set at liberty early the next morning, and had grown a moustache for the occasion. Upstairs from him, all but two of 118B’s *reos* tested negative for Covid-19, and the other two were awaiting their results. The quarantine of those *reos* might end soon. But continued confinement and bored-down hopes was the lot of most *reos*. Miami was both angry and disappointed when he heard from the grapevine—his cellmate Luchito—that he was no longer being considered for parole but would have to wait yet another year because he was only eligible for parole after two-thirds, not one-half, of his sentence had been completed. He did not know why his cellmate Luchito was meddling in the first place by talking to the *pacos* about his case, and he was perturbed by that fact. Moreover, he had no idea which *gendarme* Luchito had spoken to. He wondered if the

gendarmes wanted some monetary payoff even though parole was his legal right. Dashed hopes brought so much despair to a *reo*, and Miami was no exception. John thought that his parole in Chile might likewise be denied arbitrarily and was thankful that he had the option to go to Italy. Pamela had taken his letter to the Italian Consul to Chilexpress delivery service, to be hand-delivered on Monday, which was a relief to him—although there was yet to be a reply to the same letter sent by email.

John, Ismael, Miami, and Rubén ate their Friday meal together, as usual, prepared by Pamela and frozen by John six days earlier—the former two men enjoying their rice with gravy and soy sauce immensely. They talked a little more about allodialism resolving the public-policy caused trash-floating-on-the-ocean-problem (when plastic inputs were foolishly and arbitrarily favored over environmentally friendlier paper and glass). Too, they spent more time talking about how a jury system would remedy false convictions generated by district attorneys being friends of the judges and thus not having to convince twelve previously unknown people. Cristián’s period of investigation was extended another ninety days. He would not be seeing his newborn son anytime soon. The district attorney might have been trying to extend his sentence. Rubén dolefully surmised that they might be going for a fifteen-year sentence for robbery with intimidation, since Cristián had not divulged to him the actual charges against him. No one trusted the Chilean justice system to do justly. Ismael also corrected John’s thinking that he had a factor of 0.3 nitrates on his shooting hand; it was in fact 0.005—obviously much less, and thus his conviction much less just. Looking around the table, John observed how elegant his gray plastic plate looked compared to Miami eating off the lid of the freezer-designated plastic bowl that Rubén rummaged his food from, or the hospitalstyle, dug-out, cafeteria tray that Ismael ate from. All food containers in 118 looked like they had been picked up from a white trash garage sale in Appalachia. The *rancheros* had broken two snaps on the nifty plastic container Pamela brought John, in which Ismael had collected and eaten John’s *dieta* portion for many months. Akin to their tableware, the rest of the men’s talk was rather mundane. For example, Miami asked John to explain why Americans used a four-point scale in assigning values to the grades A, B, C, D, F and calculating a grade point average rather than something more logical like the numerical-only scale from one to seven used in Chile. Miami and John did talk a little about low-cost housing and air ambulance business, which depended on the now tenuous happening of both men being paroled or getting to a halfway house.

The only real highlight of the day occurred when Pancho and five *machucado rancheros* gave “famous” John a rousing applause as he walked past them up the stairwell. He was putting his things back in the cell prior to teaching Necúlman, who likewise congratulated John on getting nearly five years knocked off his sentence but who now seemed to believe that it was always wrong to defend oneself with a gun unless the other side had knives or guns. He used to show unabashed support for John. Now it was only the large number of adversaries that might make him question the ruling against John. (Chilean self-defense culture was so different from American.) The *reos* in the stairwell all saw amazing success in John’s court case, while John saw the mere mitigation of injustice (rather than its elimination) and, given what was happening to Miami’s parole especially, the underscoring of uncertainty and need to be willing to pay people off to get something good done. The others probably saw a net positive despite any similar misgivings they might have had about John’s actions.

The next morning, Michael rushed into the dining hall with his mouth running at a rate that

reminded John of a shaken-up three-liter bottle of 7-Up being opened. It was as if he had words pent up for days and all of the sudden he exploded. He said he missed everyone. John figured he must have driven everyone crazy confined in the same cell with him during quarantine. The guy just had to talk. Stopping him fast in his tracks, John gave him a quick lesson on etymology in language and used *homo* and *hetero* Greek prefixes as examples. He told Michael that he sometimes thought he might be rather intelligent (which made the young man smile) but just never had an opportunity to learn. Then Michael started rambling on incessantly, and John eventually just picked up his reading book and ignored Michael, going about his business. At one point, John came back into the dining area from a bathroom break and Michael was still rambling on, glorying about what John had accomplished legally with the public defender. John interrupted him to say that his victory was hardly complete but that one day he would stand with Christ to personally help in the judgment of fallen angels (1 Corinthians 6:3), not to mention his persecutors like the mendacious and vile prosecutor Paola Rojas, the judges complicit with her, and evil, lying lawyers Oliva, Díaz, and Lagos. John symbolically grabbed Michael by the shirt at the nape of his neck and acted out throwing him, just as the angels will do, into the lake of fire —eternal hell (Matthew 13:49-50; Revelation 20:12-15). That is what would happen to those who had persecuted him and caused him to suffer wrongfully. John still prayed for his present and past enemies to repent, and that they might even do so on account of reading *Bearing the Cross*, thereby avoiding certain calamity. However, should they not change course, their fate was sealed. Michael seemed to get the point and he even seemed somewhat impressed. A good Baptist preacher never shies away from thundering about hell whenever he has the opportunity. Michael provided it.

What John did in defending himself was no sin; he stood right before God even if he acted against wayward public policy based on unbiblical or anti-biblical principles. His cellmate Alexis, however, beat himself up at least twice a week that he had committed a grave error in defending himself, but that he had repented and would never again repeat his sin. He was serious about his Christian faith, much more so than other religious *reos* John met in jail. Like all Charismatics and Pentecostals, Alexis lacked thorough Bible knowledge. For instance, he always prayed for God to bless unbelieving Israel, asseverating (like a good dispensationalist) that they are still God's chosen people *in addition to* the church. Alternatively, the Apostle Paul calls the church the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16), the true children of Abraham by faith (Romans 4:11-16). The only Israelites who are saved today must receive Christ and come into the church, but Alexis coddled a wayward idea instead. Furthermore, he believed that Jesus is the pearl of great price in Matthew 13:45-46 rather than the hard-to-find kingdom of God that so few take possession of. Moreover, he believed that men sin because demons possess them, at least for a time, and cause them to behave badly. Their sinful nature he never mentioned, at least not in John's recollection. Overall, Alexis was a good, sincere Christian, who did not practice sin, even though he had some quirky beliefs. John was glad to have him as a cellmate. He did all the cleaning while Pamela brought over most of the food they ate together—other than what John got from Miami or bought through Sergio at the kiosk, and the avocados, cheese, fruit, and snacks Alexis sometimes got—and John prepared it. Alexis did not mind John's teaching and preaching on Thursday night or Sunday afternoon. Indeed, the two men had no conflicts whatsoever. While John read and wrote, or chatted with friends and family, Alexis made short calls to his wife, five children, and twelve grandchildren, listened to Christian music, prayed, or watched Christian movies. He said he read his Bible, too, and seemed to know it pretty well, although John never saw it move from under one of his books on the shelf.

It was a good day for John only because the guards let through everything Pamela brought over in *encomienda*—including eyeglass cleaning spray, salad dressing, BBQ sauce, and sweetened croissants. She brought a bag for Miami, too, with special tea, detergent, Clorox, and toilet paper that he desperately needed. It was good to be able to have something edible, and it was nice to share food and other good things (Acts 20:35) with others who enjoyed them. Pamela had sent over the Spanish versions of *Please Understand Me* by Keirsey and Bates plus *Marx and Satan* by tortured Lutheran pastor Richard Wurmbrand. Miami, Rubén, and Ismael were looking forward to finding out their temperament types (and the corresponding implications) and reading about the satanic nature of communism. Others would no doubt find the topics of interest as well, and John liked teaching both topics—both of which were also favorites of Pamela. Miami was having a better day, too, after a nearsleepless night, having worked out a strategy to get his parole try back on track and get his case appealed to the Supreme Court. Rubén was happy as well, and not just because he loved Papa John’s pizza. After being slaughtered twice in chess, losing when down by as much as twenty points, he beat John once—who claimed he had grown so bored he was no longer watching carefully. Ruben’s last victory was twelve days earlier, on February 15th, and he had lost thirty or forty games in between. But he still took his victory to heart, gloating and letting everyone know what he had done. For him, it was a good day. For others it was less so, even though it started out pretty well. As John looked on from his reading chair set out on the *patio*, Cristián hung up Marino’s tall punching bag in the *bodega* and was kicking the thing to death until it ripped open. That was bad. Meanwhile, over by the *pesebre*, Michael and Moisés had flipped over a trash can and were rummaging through the contents as if trying to find a pearl of great price. John had no idea what they were after and made an inquiry, but they ignored him. It must have been serious business, and it looked like they were having a bad day because of it.

John and Leonardo León enjoyed a good, wholesome worship service the next day, the last day of February. Ismael sat the table behind them and read his Bible, turning down his Christian music player, out of respect for the worship service. Maybe he was listening, too. Leonardo got to see how a Baptist service was conducted, and John told him that Baptists were not scared to read other books besides the Bible—which were prohibited to him by 103’s Pentecostal pastor. He also covered the differences Christian and Marxist Worldviews, trying to train Leonardo with a level of knowledge that went over the heads of the others. The fact that some of the chat was on complicated motifs (especially when they spoke in English) made it all the more admirable to those who overheard. (John found it interesting that the default language was Spanish when speaking to Leonardo, who had very good English. That meant that his Spanish was better than Leonardo’s English. John never thought his Spanish was that good!) After that, they moved on to discuss John’s case, and Leonardo could see John had gotten a raw deal from wayward Chilean justice. No communist protesters were in prison, just John. Leonardo was going to try to talk to his friend Fernández who headed the political magazine *The Clinic* (where interviews with John had appeared several times before—a couple appearing many years before the incident in Reñaca) and another journalist he knew to see if they would interview John. Other than eating burritos and peanut-butter-filled celery, and talking a bit to Miami and Rubén, John’s entire day was spent talking about important matters with Leonardo. He did not read and did not play even a single game of chess, although Rubén took two out of three from Ismael.

Chapter XXI Sown InWeakness...Raised in Power

If the last day of February 2021 was marked my Luchito showing up outside John's cell door (with Miami) to plead for "just a little more peanut butter," the first day of March 2021 was marked by Miami and Cristián (the Evangelical) enjoying one of John's sandwiches (ham, cheese, mustard, *guacamole*, lettuce) and lots of talk about Keirsey and Bates' *Please Understand Me*. Rubén (ESTJ) and Cristián (ESFJ) were "guardian" types. Miami (ENFJ) and Ismael refused to take the test, like most "idealist" (NFs) types do (at least at first), but John (ENTJ)—a "rational" type who had been taking and using this test for over twentyseven years—had no problem pegging Miami as an ENFJ, which was confirmed as soon as he read his description out loud. John guessed Ismael was an INFP but that was yet to be confirmed. Ismael was mainly impressed by Karl Marx's overt Satanism, as he read Wurmbrand's *Marx and Satan* in the dining hall. He would mutter over and again, "No! How terrible! It can't be!" His remarks made John curious enough to pick it up while Ismael was working out and read a bit himself. Of course, John had studied socialism and communism for many years and already knew how evil were Marx, Engels (who despised and detested the great Baptist preacher Charles H. Spurgeon as socialism's greatest foe), and their disciples.

The second day of March 2021, cold, gloomy, and overcast like the day before, was another dull day where everyone was trying to find something to do. Cristián had been taken down to the courthouse in Valparaíso for a hearing to see if he would get to go to home arrest. Carlos (the elder) was, like usual, only downstairs until his breakfast came—which he then carried to his cell along with his insulin shot kit. Like John, his chronic medications had not arrived in nearly a week. No one had been working at the nurse's station, and Pamela was told over the phone that John's prescription drugs would not arrive until the next day. Surprisingly, John's blood pressure had not risen above 135/83 at 2:30 p.m. each day without taking his Oltan Amlo 40/5 medication (he was, however, still taking Espironolactona 25 mg daily, instead of just thrice a week, which probably helped). Even better, it was normal—129/81—after waking up from his nap at 5:30 p.m. (He began to wonder if he needed the missing medicine any longer.)

Other than brief appearances by Michael, Pato (the invalid), and Jorge, the *machucados* did not appear out on the *patio* until 1:30 p.m. Miami only had to clean the bathroom and showers once (to help John's conduct score) since there was so little use. Some of the *machucados* hadn't even showed up for Castro's roll call, which featured only twelve *reos*—eight of whom went into their cells in 118B or left to hang out inside the main building working with wood. That left just John, Miami, Rubén, and Ismael out on the *patio* (or in the dining room) all morning. To pass the time, Miami ended up trimming ivy and plants, along with pruning makeshift-potted flowers—calling John out of his den to inspect and appreciate his work. Before working out, Ismael had read his book and then lied down on the chairs to sleep—with his face bundled up as if he were skiing in a blizzard—all the while his new radio blaring music next to him. Rubén was kicking back under the *bodega* after having lost two games of chess to John (although he did manage to pull off a draw later in the day)—who was otherwise reading a book in the dining hall. John's overall chess record had hit 1,703-145-39.

John had a disappointing day, not only because his prescription medications had not arrived but also because *Comandante Toledo* had not come to see him. *Cabo Salas* had stopped by his cell

the previous afternoon to let him know that he had spoken to her and that she would be coming to see John the next morning with “good news” about getting him to a *CET* earlier than usual. However, she never came. Miami told him, “Salas has got some mental problems in addition to his skin problems; put the probability of anything he tells you coming to pass at 5%.” John still held out some hope that she might have gotten busy (she was the commanding officer in charge of all three thousand prisoners), and still might come the next day. At least John got a good amount of reading done, albeit with difficulty on account of his left eye not focusing well and things still “floating” in his vision. It made him think that he needed to get to an Italian prison sooner than later in order to get medical treatment. (Pamela confirmed online that the Consul had received John’s letter through Chilexpress on March 1st.) At least John was using Listerine once a day to try to keep any infection at bay stemming from his busted molar. It still seemed so absurd that he could not get the medical and dental care he needed. Chilean prisons were designed with torture in mind. As he read, he also managed to smash ten flies with his palm against Rubén’s table cloth—one a double strike. It was just one of those days lost to perdition. There is never a good day in terrestrial hell but a dull one was certainly better than an eventful one, even if John was ailing and disappointed.

Those feelings turned into minor depression for John in ensuing days. Almost nothing was going well. His books were not yet printed, the *gendarmes* who promised to help John get to a *CET* had not shown up, there was no word from the Italian embassy, his medications had not been delivered (although, even after a week, his blood pressure remained remarkably good: 126/77 at 2:30 p.m. and 131/83 after his nap), his eyesight was still impaired (especially his left eye that could not focus on text), he had lost some part of his sense of smell (not being able to distinguish pungent or foul odors any longer), and Pamela was having trouble taking care of legal and financial errands—due to no fault of her own. For instance, he could not get some needed money out of his private social security account, nor could he recover his four pistols (the ones not used in the “crime”) from the investigative police—Guillermo Améstica saying that authorization had yet to be given. Leonardo León had been dragging his feet, too, on writing to his friends at *The Clinic* magazine and elsewhere in order to line up some interviews for John. Leonardo, in typically Chilean fashion, said he would get on it after the weekend—leaving doubt in John’s mind. To make matters worse, well-known Chilean libertarian, Axel Kaiser, whom John knew, published an article in the *Cato Journal* entitled, “The Fall of Chile,” indicating the end of the free market “experiment” in the country in which John had dedicated twenty-five years of his life. The article also reminded John that Axel had done absolutely nothing to help John in his time of need—not even reviewing *Bearing the Cross*. In fact, the lack of promised Amazon reviews of that book by John’s friends and supporters was another source of discouragement.

Moreover, some *machucado* had stolen some meat out of one of John’s freezer containers, but he did not know it till he had opened it in order to make dinner in his cell—meaning that Alexis and he had little to eat for dinner one night. Another *machucado* looking for a “loan” to buy cigarettes had entered their cell as well, asking for John. It seems someone had seen John with his wallet open when he was buying food from the kiosk (via Chuncoco) or when he gave *machucado* Sergio from 118B a thousand pesos out on the *patio*. Now word had spread that John was some sort of bank. Trying to cut that thinking off at the knees, John had refused the unhappy *ranchero*. John was happy to be generous with his food but could not finance the whims, fancies, and vices of *machucados* who saw him as *de pana*. To top it all off, his poor mood led to three losses (two to Rubén and one to Ismael) out of nine chess matches played on March 4th. He had

been otherwise cruising to victory both on the *patio* and online. He had played 137 games online and won all but eleven—over half of which were due to his Internet connection dropping and him being declared the “loser” for taking too much time to make his move. There was also talk about a new nationwide Covid-19 quarantine that would once again halt visitation and make Pamela’s life more miserable, along with talk about requiring an electronic vaccination certificate to be able to board a flight by mid-year. The latter could have an effect on John’s proposed transfer to Italy since both Pamela and he were strongly against taking any of the apparently dangerous vaccines. There were a lot of negative vibes prancing around that added up to something significant in John’s mind. Overall, John’s feeling of helplessness and dependency on others had been taking their toll.

Nonetheless, there was some good news going around for John and others. His friend Bob had called and retained Pablo Larredonda to be his attorney in order to help him get to a *CET* or set up with other parole benefits, and possibly to help with the Italian transfer process that David Zúñiga had been supposedly working on (but who had become unresponsive once again). Lawyer Naomi had evidently found a specialized lawyer to help Miami with his Supreme Court hearing try, too. Miami was excited about the recent “Tomasito case,” where a district attorney in the Concepción area had been pulled off a case for accusing the uncle—without evidence—of killing a four-year-old boy who was found dead from natural causes after being missing on his ranch for nine days. At least some measures were being taken against Chile’s problem with relentless, mendacious, and wayward prosecutors running amok. John’s former cellmate Guillermo reported that he had arrived at the small Casablanca jailhouse, where the food was better, the risk of harm far lower, and where cell phone use was permitted on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. He was quite content, and John and others in 118 were relieved. John’s friend Álvaro was still working on local publisher Líbero, whose general manager Larraín would be back in the office from vacation in a few days, to see if the Spanish version of *Bearing the Cross* could finally be published. The cowardice of “right-wing” publishers up to this point had been a source of considerable discouragement. While John’s fame continued to linger on inside prison in a positive way, it seemed to have lingering negative effects outside—even though more sympathy had been generated by his unjust suffering in the wake of the Supreme Court decision.

At least inside jail John could get a few chuckles watching Michael show up from time to time flattering himself (and John) for having known the “famous man,” and from Cristián (the supposed robber) having to ask John what letter followed G in the alphabet, and later asking what followed N. John was amused by the nice young man who did not read and yet had somehow obtained a college degree in physical education without knowing the alphabet. It was certainly more amusing than continuing to palm flies against the table, which John relentlessly pursued. Cristián, whose request to change to home arrest had just been (sadly but hardly surprisingly) denied, had also been trying to figure out his temperament score. John had asked him to let his livein girlfriend answer the sorter questions for him since he was unable to answer them by considering what his native tendencies were instead of what he wanted them to be. Being a professor again, even with largely illiterate students, was somewhat uplifting for John. Even more so was his opportunity to teach that evening (via Historic Baptists Zoomcast) about the biblical teaching on paying taxes, starting with Luke 2:1-2; 23:2; 20:18-26; Matthew 17:24-27; and Romans 13:5-7

Cristián (the evangelical barber) decided to learn chess, too, and John taught him somewhat the following day, March 5th. He already had some skill and it would not be long before he was playing well. Both men had been pestered by Castro, who enjoyed putting them in check whenever possible: Cristián for being late to morning lineup after his pass to cut hair in other *módulos* had been denied for the day, and John after reporting to another *gendarme*-from-the-statistics-office's call to receive and sign some paper from the local court. John was standing inside the 118 office behind another *reo*, where Sergio had told him to wait, when Castro shooed him out. "Wait out on the *patio*," he scoffed, as John headed back to his interrupted chess game, "No! Stand right here next to the door!" John complied with the pompous order from the little man. Then Cristián, too, was called to wait behind him. Despite having to put up with Castro's antics, he told John that 118 was far better than 103 or 111. Although any day with Castro around left something to be desired, this late "Summer" day's fog and gloom compounded the mood. The drizzle was so thick that it left significant puddles on the *patio*. John had to take off his glasses while walking, it was so wet. And Miami—lacking certain requisite prophetic skills—had left John's clothes and sheets on the line to dry, expecting sunshine. Instead, everything was drenched and John would have to go a second night without sheets. Miami lent him some replacements but John was not about to dirty them for just a night or two's use. Rubén had forgotten to bring down his sandwich maker to cook the *quesadilla* rolls John brought down, and with the dreaded Castro in charge, he dared not ask permission to return to his cell to fetch it. No worries: they could rely on Miami sneaking past enemy lines while getting everyone's breakfast of white bread, runny yogurt, and a slice of white cheese, acquiring the artifact from Ruben's cell during his run.

The main reason why John could continue to be generous was that support kept rolling in for Pamela and him from many kind people from the Right and from Evangelicals, as well as John's son David. Pamela had never lacked anything during John's ordeal. She even had money to pay for her Italian classes, which were essential in case John was transferred to prison in Italy. She would need to get her Italian passport to enter and live in that Covid-19 restricted country, and that required B1-level certification of intermediate-level Italian. A friend had also offered to pick up the bill for lawyer Pablo Larredonda to take John's case and help him get to *CET* and parole or related benefits from the penitentiary system, as well as dealing with his medical and dental care needs. The public defender's office simply did not provide an effective alternative. Helping him get transferred to Italy would also fall under Pablo's responsibilities. Others devoted some of their time to John. For instance, Valentín and others were slowly working on perfecting the translation of *Suffering Unjustly*, along with handling some of John's financial affairs. Pamela, always attentive to John's needs, was awaiting instructions from Guillermo to pick up John's other four registered pistols, which could be sold. The only place John was not getting support was from the *gendarmes*. None of the guards he had worked out a deal with to get him to a *CET* had shown up, neither had *Comandante* Toledo. Moreover, no one had brought him his medications, that Pamela had dropped off over a week ago.

One of the loaves of bread Pamela had brought got moldy at one end around midweek. John threw out half of it and cut off the rest of the remaining cancer. But he could not bear the sharp taste still (even when lined with peanut butter and jelly). So he used tortillas to make wraps the rest of the week instead of sandwiches and offered the dissected loaf to Cristián (the feigned robber) who, despite the caveat, was glad to take it and use it. Food was always sparse and of lower quality on Fridays, and this week was no exception. Alexis forgot to buy more cheese,

although he had been thoughtful enough to bring John a hard-boiled egg—and so Friday's dinner and Saturday's breakfast would be a bit Spartan. However, what Chileans lacked in food they made up for in chat. Conversation in the dining hall that day had mainly centered on some Bible study questions led by Luchito, some grumbling about Castro, some talk about the tsunami warning the night before (generated by an 8.1 Richter Scale earthquake out in the South Pacific) that ended up being cancelled, chess and why Ruben's boasting was in bad form (especially today after John swept him 3-0 and he went 1-1 with Ismael), and the news that *Che* had been convicted of robbery with assault (sentenced to something like eight years) and had since become the *mozo* of 112. John also chuckled as Miami gave his speech to both Cristián's, Rubén, John, and Ismael (with Michael and Moroni buzzing about) about how they made up an atom (perhaps a molecule) in 118 wherein John was the nucleus of the atom and all the others were electrons circling about him. They all enjoyed, as usual, some of the meat and golden potatoes that Pamela had brought, and Miami once again cleaned the bathroom and showers before John could get to them.

Miami also recounted to John his impressions and insights regarding the aforementioned Tomasito case. "The disappearance of a child in southern Chile is newsworthy today. Watching and listening to the news, and the story's development day-by-day, the actions of the prosecutor in charge of the case drew my attention. He was removed from playing a key role in the case he began due to his failure to collect the trial evidence that might indicate either the guilt or innocence of the defendant. I am a convicted inmate, and even if I don't want to remember my time spent in court, through that experience I was able to grasp the shoddy work done by prosecutors. As seen on television, the accused man in the Tomasito case was arraigned without any supporting evidence that would back preparatory measures decreed by the judge. Seeing that fact in turn roused questions from one of the television hosts: 'How many cases like this one have occurred with other people accused of different crimes?' I would reply that they occur daily within the Chilean justice system."

He continued, "In our republican social organization, maintaining order and healthy coexistence is assured by different state institutions, including the Ministry of Justice with its two branches in charge of resolving various crimes: (1) the district attorney or prosecutor and (2) the public defender. Today, I am watching this high-profile case that highlights the exemplary work of a judge who was impartial and transparent, not to mention had a sense of responsibility, presiding over the arraignment. He was able to stave off any influence or pressure generated by the social upheaval related to the case—unleashed by the prosecutor in his opening statements. Hence, he was an extraordinary judge. It seems to me that the prosecutor showed a lack of commitment to always seek the truth based on the facts and did not maintain the accused's presumption of innocence. In so doing, the prosecutor further eroded our system of justice, a process which has been ongoing for some time. Prosecutors always try to win their cases. In blaming the accused, whether or not they have any evidence, they try to close the case as quickly as possible. Yet, in so doing, someone is accused and arrested based on his own statement, or that of someone closest to the event, a companion, or the last person to see him. Anyone can be used to make such an accusation before the judge. Nevertheless, the authorities have been loath to see the cracks in the system. They are far removed from such problems experienced by citizens who are treated unjustly. Hence, it is worth knowing that judges exist like the woman who presided over the Tomasito case. Indeed, without discarding the possibility that the accused is the culprit, evidence can be used to confirm, deny, or demonstrate his guilt or innocence based on

successfully establishing the following threefold criteria: finding empirical, factual, and scientific proof that back up the merits of any evidence. Unfortunately, in modern Chilean courts, mere affirmations or unverified statements are often admitted as solid evidence instead of subjecting them to this threefold rigor, leading to innocent people being convicted or guilty people being over-punished.”

March 6th was gloomy in the morning and a silly queen giveaway (when playing Rubén, leading to a loss) made John depressed. In response, Miami tried to counsel and encourage the one he would later refer to as a “great man.” Yet, John knew that there was no reason for him to be depressed. Rubén’s gloating was stupid, and he only beat John occasionally, and rarely beat him unless John made some silly error like giving away his queen. John did not pay attention well enough, especially after beating Rubén handily dozens of times and routinely having a points advantage of more than ten at checkmate. No, there was no reason for Rubén’s cackling to make John depressed and to actually cause him to stop playing for the day (after winning his first game and losing the second). He recalled Ecclesiastes 7:6, “For like the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool.” What was Rubén anyway? His wayward chess disciple? So how could making a simple mistake cause him such grief? John said nothing to anyone but the depression must have been written all over his face, even as he sat quietly and read *American Vertigo*. Miami, the insightful ENFJ, came over to him to encourage him with stories of his own journey and how the Lord had helped him. Moreover, he reminded John that no one in jail had the support network he did, nor the faith, knowledge, experience, and helpful wife and friends shoring him up. God had placed him in prison for a purpose and he needed to be content with that fact. For Miami, depression was a fake disease that made no sense.

John said he concurred entirely, showing him his reading the day before from the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 7:6: “God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus.” John had plenty of Tituses in his life: Valentín, Bob, his son David, Miami himself, and several others. It was not just sending Pamela and him money, like the first three of those men, along with Pablo, Jim, Greg, Davinci, Luís, Joe, Dan, Bert, Patrick, a friend named John, and many others. It was the encouraging word, or service to his health care, writing, or ministry that Gino, Dusan, Jano, Obed, Daniel, Claudio, Alejandro, Nadia, María, Ricardo, his daughter Grace, one of his cousins, or his five physician or dentist friends gave. Álvaro would call regularly and help with so many things from keeping his home to the publication of his book and sending him movies to calm his mind. There were many others that could be tacked onto the list, too, not the least of which were his books’ translators, Hermógenes, Martín, and Leónidas, and the countless people holding him up in prayer regularly. So how could John be depressed? There seemed to be some connection with sleep; after a nap he always felt better. There was another connection with daily circumstances, disappointments, or threats, and little incidents of griefs as well—all of which were taking an inordinate toll on him, which was illogical.

In the final analysis, John told Miami that he believed he was being tested. “A downcast, pessimistic leader affects everyone negatively, while one who is strong and vibrant in the midst of trying circumstances can encourage them and lead them on to victory.” Miami concurred. John had said nothing to anyone, but his usual upbeat, highly spiritual, and dominantly intellectual and strategic demeanor was missing, and other *reos* had noticed it. Idealists like Miami and Ismael spotted it quickly, as did both Cristiáns (who said nothing). Michael buzzed in and started blabbing about John’s exploits in self-defense and “triumph” in the Supreme Court,

trying to change John's apparently dour mood. For such people, John usually read a lot, which was in itself impressive, but now he was apparently reading too much—thereby neglecting to attend to other things. They somehow knew, too, that the silly loss to Rubén indicated that something might be wrong with John. When a prominent figure is not his usual self, even without saying a word, people notice. People in general need leaders and people to look up to, and that is hard to do when the leader is down.

John figured that he was being tested by God in setting up rotten circumstances or by sending the devil himself to pester him. He recalled Revelation 2:10 about Satan throwing Christians into prison that they may be tested, Isaiah 45:7 about God Himself creating calamity in one's life, and, ultimately, Job 2:10, "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" Yet, unlike godly Job who was pestered by four sadly mistaken "friends," John—a much weaker and less godly believer—was sent Tituses kind of like what the Apostle Paul got. Sure, John had gotten a raw deal and was suffering unjustly. But he was not the only one. The difference between him and other modern-day sufferers he came in contact with or knew about, lay in his experiences, faith, intellectual or writing abilities, and the Tituses God had sent him. He needed to focus on these blessings rather than the adversity or beleaguered circumstances. He needed to be able to see Satan in Castro, too, who was little more than a useful tool for evil, and not let him get under his skin. "Though He slay me, yet will I trust him" (Job 13:15) must be his creed.

Then again, John also had some fleeting thoughts that he was just suffering from self-inflicted, undue aggrandizement, that he was not that important to anyone, that the reality was that he was a prisoner for being a fool, rather than "doing good," and that God had abandoned him to reap what he had sown. Then Bob called, and John thought that Tituses probably don't get sent to fools or people paying for their sins. There was, after all, a raging spiritual warfare bubbling out in seething public policies—John's field of study, manifested in all sorts of things ranging from cultural or economic Marxism to gender ideology and abortion to injustice to the undermining of religious sentiment itself. Whether or not John would ever play a significant role in continuing to combat any of it was really not up to him. If there really is a God that John believed in, He would be more than capable of defending His own ways on His terms, regardless of how someone relatively insignificant like John—or Miami or Tituses for that matter—might fit into that divine strategy. Just knowing by faith that God had lavished His love upon John (1 John 3:1, Ephesians 3:20, and Romans 8:34-39) and that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28) was good enough! It was always the practical theology that ultimately impelled John and carried him through thick and thin. And no one could see that better than his wife Pamela, who had just dropped off John's weekly *encomienda* sack, or his close Christian companions like Valentín.

John and Valentín led an uplifting Historic Baptist Zoomcast episode (on the life of Elisha series) the next day, and that morning John led a worship service with Leonardo León in 118, considering why Christians should (for pragmatic or practical reasons) pay taxes—even to evil states. He also covered what the kingdom of God is. John lent Professor León, who clarified that he was the country's top history recruit for the University of Chile's history department, where he had studied three years before being exiled, the Spanish translation of Nancy Pearcey's *Total Truth*—so that he could better comprehend the Christian Worldview. A newcomer named Nico (31), convicted and sentenced to five years in prison for illegally carrying a gun and cocaine,

arrived and asked John permission to sit at the table, which was granted of course. A nominal Catholic, John asked him about his faith and then shared the simple Gospel and way of salvation with him. John was a little annoyed with Cristián (the evangelical barber), who soon went to work instead of attending, for telling the newcomer that his faith in God was good, and that he was on the right track. Like the Bible says, even Satan and the demons believe in God, but that does nothing to help them (James 2:19). The fellowship and teaching did much to boost John's spirits. So did listening to hymns on the internet. After taking a day off from chess, he came back and beat Ruben by 14 points in the first game, then 21 points in the second, and although down by 2 points in the third (after having to trade his queen and a pawn for a rook and a bishop), checkmated Rubén three moves later due to the superior position he had gained in the trade. Miami looked on, fascinated at the triple-trouncing, while John wondered why his emotional condition had been so weak. How could making a stupid move the other day, costing him his queen, have sent him into a tailspin? Prison was obviously wreaking havoc on John. He had learned chess at age five from his Uncle Dan in Chicago, and had learned at an early age to be gracious in both triumphs and defeats, too, garnering third place in the Orange County (California) chess championship when he was in fifth grade (age 10). While no one likes to lose, losing itself did not normally affect him. The fact that Rubén did not have good chess manners was irrelevant. Yet, how could it be that John knew all that and had still become so sensitive to making mistakes?

Sunday had brought other slightly irksome events. There was never a good day in terrestrial hell, even if 118 was the best part of it. Some hassle, some grief, some unexpected change leading to despair had to occur. The freezer really stank and Michael and Rubén led the effort to clean it. Soon after it was carried outside, Ismael was seen hauling an open bag of old shrimp and seafood to the trash. After the box freezer was cleaned and dried—the day being bright and sunny, good for mood-boosting vitamin D3 production—the fan below (exposed and without a protective cover) made a clicking noise as it spun. John at first figured the friction would break the unit's motor and he would have no place to store his food for the week. But Sergio (from 118B) moved one thing, and tightened another, getting it to work properly. There were other little surprises, too. For reasons unknown, Mauricio moved back to 118 from 118B, living with Ismael and Pato next door to John and Alexis. The *reos* with *dominical* benefits were still not allowed to have Sunday leave due to the ineffective Covid-19 requirements—repeated even though they had had no meaningful effect in reducing disease in over a year. Hence, the *patio* was relatively full, and the ping pong table was broken out for the *reos'* entertainment. Besides reading, the only entertainment John had was to crush another dozen flies, and to clean out the bathroom and shower area in order to keep Castro off his back.

Chapter XXII From the Power of Satan to God

On Monday the 8th, Valparaíso was scheduled to be put back into full quarantine (phase 1), meaning that visitation would stop. That was sad, but at least Viña del Mar's Coronavirus was still only working the weekends in that area, which would allow Pamela to move about on weekdays. However, the new restriction might affect lawyer visits in prison. John's presumptive new lawyer, Pablo Larredonda, did not show up on Monday (which was a known possibility if his trial schedule was not cleared), nor did the Italian Consul or the *gendarmes* who said they would arrange to get him into a *CET* come by. John thought about asking Cisternas, in charge of 118 that day, if he could intervene, but in the end decided to postpone that conversation. So the day was as discouraging as it was boring, although John dazzled the core group of *reos* in the dining hall by adding a sliced hard-boiled egg to his turkey, cheese, and *guacamole* sandwiches, which Ismael and Miami later shared with him. John was also slightly annoyed by having to walk over to the *pesebre* so often to wash fly splatter off his palms. About the biggest spectacle of the morning was to watch Delfín—dutifully supplied earlier with taffy and citrus gummies by John—pushing his wheelchair around the *patio* and into the dining hall. (He was looking for Ismael to push him up to the infirmary.). Discussion began up again on the merits of being in the best part of terrestrial hell, as John continued to refuse to answer “fine” to everyone’s morning banal query, “How are you?”

Then Michael and Moisés arrived on the scene motoring along in *flaite* something about the 9/11 attacks that John could not understand, with Michael moving his head, arms, and hands faster than a young John Travolta in a discotheque. Of course, Michael was almost exclusively looking at a captivated John as he rambled on. But his countenance fell a bit after three minutes of jabbering, under the laughter of the other *reos* present, when John turned to Cristián (evangelical barber) and asked, “What did he just say? I do not understand *flaite*.” The skinny guy then proceeded to repeat much of the discourse with slightly less *flaite* and much more hand and arm (plus leg) gestures. He was a big fan of the United States, he said, until he learned that the government had scammed the world by toppling the Twin Towers and boring into the Pentagon with a missile instead of a plane. The act was so entertaining that John decided to reply using his own random, wild arm movements, mimicking Michael, and letting him know in no uncertain terms that he had known about all of these things, citing even more evidence of the scam, which had occurred even while Michael and Moisés were still in diapers. Michael objected that was eleven at the time, to which John asked if that meant he had stopped using diapers, amusing the group. Then the discussion of American deceit and imperialism was cranked up, with Carlos (the elder) stepping in and discussing other U.S. false flags like the naval ship suspiciously blowing up in Havana harbor in 1898, inciting the Spanish-American War. John added the Lusitania, Pearl Harbor, and JFK’s bullet that supposedly turned 90° while in mid-flight to the mix. Moisés threw in the moon landing, and Ismael the Area 51 cover-ups, both of which John said had reasonable explanations for doubters’ questions—unlike the aforementioned cases. At any rate, the *machucados* were continuing to learn. John again challenged Michael to use his smarts to become better-educated in things like history and to let go of his fantasy about the virtues of the United States. He said things like the terrorist’s intact passport found amidst the rubble in New York had cured him, along with adjacent Building 7’s “sadness” leading to its “suicide” (John’s terms that impressed Ismael).

Moisés and Ismael then spouted communist and nationalist poppycock about foreign ownership of mines and private tollways raising prices to Chilean consumers, robbing Chileans of what was “theirs.” John gave them a quick lesson in capital and monopoly theory, satisfying them that foreign ownership was not bad but instead was instead a good thing and was being used by the unscrupulous or ignorant to take the heat off bad public policy and ambitious political actors who were the true culprits. No one in the room trusted Chilean politicians and wily bureaucrats. It was never hard for John to convince any of his Chilean students that their own government was the root of the country’s woes. The teaching opportunity was good for John’s mood and his hearers’ knowledge. Moreover, the temporary blood pressure medicine Miami gave John (for which Dr. Luís had prescribed the dose) was working to keep him around 120/70. He was keeping his busted, now somewhat sore, molar clean, too, with the Listerine and special toothbrushes Pamela had brought him. Indeed, he had had worse days. There was no reason to complain.

At least until the next day came. It started out well; Cisternas was in charge and John even inquired if he knew of any informal way to get him into a *CET*. Unfortunately, he said that he had heard of such possibilities but did not know how to make it happen. John also let Cisternas know that he needed to see the dentist, upon hearing Carlos (the elder)’s urging. Besides that, the rest of the morning was fairly boring. Miami had a large amount of washing to do for *rancheros* and Ismael mostly slept. John finished reading *American Vertigo* and thrashed Rubén in four chess matches, checkmating him with points ahead 6, 10, 5, and 14, respectively. The core group delighted in John’s sandwiches again (identical to those he made the day before). Then the bad news came and the tumult started, just before 2 p.m., that would change the face of 118. At least twenty-five new *machucados* were arriving, having attained their *dominical* benefits (albeit temporarily suspended by the government’s Covid19 restrictions).

John counted eighteen of these rabble lined up before Cisternas, who made sure they understood that 118 was a nice *módulo* (*piola*) and if they acted up they would get the boot. More continued to arrive—at least ten, maybe fifteen by John’s estimate. Most would not be doing any quasi-slave labor outside the *módulo*, meaning that they would stay on the *patio* all morning and, therefore, the character of *patio* life would now change extraordinarily. Miami, Ismael, and Rubén all commented that the change would likely be for the worse. Hans (30s), an ex-cop who was once before kicked out of 118 for bad behavior, was among the newcomers and spoke with Miami a bit. This surprise increase in men who had been in the general population was worrisome, and could be potentially dangerous—especially for sexual predators and perhaps John. Alexis was required to change cells and live with Delfín in 118A. He was very unhappy, both because he detested bedbugs (which cohabitated symbiotically with Delfín) and because he had been very happy living with John. John helped him move some of his stuff down across the *patio* and told Delfín that living with Alexis would be as easy as living with him, granting Delfín a sense of relief. Alexis fixed up the lower bunk and got himself moved in. It looked like late-arriving *machucados* (that John saw as he returned to his cell) would also be filling up the upper bunks above Alexis and Delfín. Poor Alexis and Delfín were probably about to have a really bad night.

Wanting to avoid a similar plight, Michael was quick to try to recruit John to move in with him, Sergio, and Moisés. He said he kept the place clean. But they smoked and John had no interest in moving in with *machucados* if he could help it. He wanted nothing to do with their television or music either. It is doubtful that Cisternas (or Chuncoco) would permit John to be in 118B

anyway, no matter how much the *machucados* liked him. So, much to their chagrin, that group had to receive one or two others of their own kind from the general population instead.

John had a new project of his own hands, with Cristián, and he was quick to remind him of his need for a Savior and that his sins would only land him in hell. Cristián told John that his wife was a Pentecostal Christian and had told him to respect John since he was "a man of God." He further said that he was interested in reforming his life, all the while preparing his little pot pipe and then taking four hits, blowing the smoke over John's bed out the window. Most of the second-hand smoke ended up in John's lungs, of course. Then Cristián sprayed perfume to make the air smell nice. (He said he also burned incense to accomplish the same thing.) John's only previous pothead cellmate had been *Rufo*. Not wanting to lose the opportunity to share the Gospel with him—as a good Baptist—figuring that the Lord had put the young man in his cell for a reason, John told Cristián about the hell that awaited him should he choose to continue to live in sin, and that the Christian life was about faith and suffering (Philippians 1:29), not always about fun and prosperity. Moreover, it would cost him to come to Christ and live according to God's principles. Yet, this was the age of grace and God was willing to forgive him his sins and grant him eternal life through simple faith in Jesus Christ that, if genuine, would be followed by obedience to the word of God and doing good works. He read him John 3:16-21 and talked about the great gift that God was offering him, and how he would be condemned if he rejected it. He then sent him to read Isaiah 55:1-8 on his own. Cristián had plenty of time since his cell phone had no bars. He was listening to John, and maybe to God. Time would tell if he would change. John awoke from his nap to find Cristián excited to tell him that he had also read the first few chapters of Genesis, that the forbidden fruit was not necessarily an apple, and that women had pangs in childbirth on account of Eve's fall into sin. He then filled his pipe with pot and took four more hits, blowing the refer smoke over John's legs toward the window.

The next day, Castro reviewed the far-longer-thanusual prisoner formation line (39), with stragglers coming in late, keeping a keen watch over the newcomers, mostly arrived from *módulo* 113. He then dismissed all the 118 regulars and had a long, stern talk with the others about behaving themselves, not asking 118's regulars for loans or other goodies. After "the count" (roll call formation) everyone went to their own corners. Only Miami and (later) Rubén bothered to congratulate John on his 58th birthday, other than Pamela and his son David. Pamela had made a really sweet gesture that morning, which John had seen just before a third of his freshly made *quesadillas* fell through a hole in the bag used the transport them downstairs. She sent hugs and kisses and a nice song about friends that, come whatever joy or sadness, the two of them would be able to face all together. She longed to be able to enjoy their sea view together (with his beloved "golden" son David visiting). It was a very sweet and touching sentiment that John had not heard in his sixteen months of confinement, which were completed that day. John offered the fallen *quesadilla* pieces he had picked up (and intended to throw out) to Christian, who accepted them and gobbled them down readily. The young man had also broken his "I do not read" sentiment, having read through Genesis chapter forty-three along with all the comments in the footnotes of John's copy of the *Reformed Heritage Study Bible* (in Spanish). Both the mother of his infant son and his own mother (also a big fan of John's) were delighted in his change of attitude and religious interest, and pleased that he had an opportunity to live with John.

After Castro 's pep talk, John went out and finished his breakfast with 118's core members. Bread did not arrive until after the first *rancho* so it was just snacking. At some point he went out

to finish his walk, saying hello to some of the heretofore timid newcomers, two of whom remembered him from 109, and most of whom were from 113—a *módulo de conducta* where they had to behave. The only black guy John had seen in his time in jail was among them, a Colombian prisoner named Luís who took pride in the fact that his father was imprisoned in Georgia (America). Both Cristiáns had met some of these *machucados*, too, especially John’s new cellmate who was drumming up tattoo business with the newcomers. Miami was running into them while doing his service work. Rubén and Ismael were the most timid among the 118 regulars on the *patio*. Eventually, John went and played his first chess match against Rubén, soundly beating him while some of the newcomers and barber Cristián watched. (Castro had converted his barber room into a cell for those spending their last hours before being freed so Cristián had no regular workplace any longer.) Four of them were not bad chess players, one beating Rubén two out of three. But John beat them all, one after another, before retiring from chess for the day. Their names were Fernando, Esteban, Miguel, and Alan (21), the latter being a relatively new Evangelical, in prison three years for a minor drug charge (although months later Rubén would tell John that Alan was also in for armed assault). The youngster had talked about his faith over breakfast (having known Cristián the evangelical barber previously) and then proceeded to read his Bible most of the morning in the dining hall. John’s chess dominance, along with Michael and Moisés boasting about him out on the *patio* before several others (and their two new cellmates), seemed to earn John a quick level of respect from the newcomer rabble. Alexis and Delfín ended up alone for the time being, probably giving the former some level of peace, too.

In other news, although Cristián was fascinated with his new Baptist cellmate, he asked Castro if he could switch cells. He did not want to bother John with his pot smoke, which he continued to emit during his second day with John. But Castro, who detested Cristián, berated him and denied the request. Then Sergio (*Chuncoco*) opened the portal to the dining hall and asked Rubén and Miami if they wanted to participate in a First Grade course. A *gendarme* instructor had been sent to 118 to find them, since the system showed that they had completed no education past kindergarten. For John, the request was just a little more of the insanity found in prison, just like the cantankerous yelling match that went on that evening through the cell windows. John was generally oblivious to the nonsense of jail life, reading his book to escape it. He just started *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak. As he returned to his cell that afternoon, he found Aaron welding some contraption to train dogs. Castro had coopted him into doing slave labor, in the stairwell (of course) where there were no cameras, in order to facilitate his business breeding dogs. John had time to watch Aaron build it for a bit while Cristián asked him to give him space to thoroughly clean their cell. Then Angelino passed by, showing off his cotton patch where he had just been vaccinated against Covid-19. He was proud to have taken the American (Pfizer) version rather than the Chinese one. John was sad for him, explaining the many reported dangers and significant mortality rates from such under-tested vaccines. Angelino said that *reos* and *gendarmes* alike had been lined up to get their shots. Once in his cell, *mozo* Aníbal stopped by to ask John and Cristián if they wanted to be vaccinated. Both men gave him a quick and resounding, “No.” After dinner, John patiently awaited a video call from his children David and Grace, and his grandsons William and Aidan. But by the time the adults were together the kids were in bed. The session was rescheduled for the following night. At first, a bad connection prevented the call.

The next day was a good one for John and Miami as lawyers Pablo Larredonda and Carlos

Palacios showed up early to interview them and take their cases. It was not easy for them to get into the prison or Valparaíso during quarantine, but by dropping John's name, the man they were coming to visit, the *carabinero* (cop) at the roadblock let them through. They discussed the political nature of John's case with him, something that was already painfully obvious to John, that led to his prison sentence with maximum penalties applied to lesser "crimes"—all of which precluded home arrest. They would handle *CET*, the Italy transfer request, and other lesser legal needs or errands. After the lineup with forty men, Castro stuck his nose into everyone's business (as usual) barking out orders on the *patio* to separate activities (like putting weight lifting efforts under the male avocado tree and other activities elsewhere). He also walked past John, Miami, Pablo, and Carlos at least four times, for whatever reason. Prior to the lawyers' arrival, Cristián the evangelical barber, who did six haircuts that day with all the newcomers, preached on the *patio* for ten minutes to fourteen men about Christ not coming to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. John closed in prayer. John's cellmate Cristián also tattooed some newcomers. Business was booming for the two Cristiáns. John made no money that day but did triumph in chess rematches over Alan and Miguel. While he read outside, several newcomers came up to talk with him, too, and to see if he was friendly—which he always was. Esteban (29), a thief specializing in purchasing jewelry with stolen credit cards (particularly in the United States), wanted to know John's full story. He would soon be back on the streets, starting with Sundays-home as soon as quarantine was lifted. Thus, another day passed. The only nuisance being the pot smoke rising up from under John's bunk, for which Cristián made a failed attempt at covering up with incense. Cristián seemed to be trying to mend his ways and even put him on the phone with Elen, the mother of his infant son, who was delighted to talk with John and glad that he was Cristián's cellmate. She was hoping for his conversion and, later, their marriage.

Cristián had been accused of a questionable sexual abuse charge by a disgruntled former girlfriend whom he said was a crack-smoking Pentecostal with a violent temper. She was the mother of his first two children with an ax to grind, but he had a rock-solid alibi with a witness placing him away from the scene of the alleged crime. Yet the case had never made it to court since he had never received service— notifying him that he was going to be placed under arrest. When he showed up at the Investigative Police station he was surprised to be arrested and the judge ruled that he must stay in jail for being rebellious. Among the many quirks in Chile's legal system is the near universal requirement that people accused of crimes be notified that the Investigative Police would soon be coming to arrest them. Apparently, the justice system wants to grant criminals ample opportunity to flee or avoid prosecution. John and Pamela had seen this happen in their lives, as José Antonio Acosta Silva got away with several scams amounting to around fifty million pesos in losses to the couple. Yet no one, not even a private detective, could catch him at home to notify him. The district attorney told John and Pamela in 2016 that he was too busy processing so many cases that were even bigger scams or involving heinous crimes that he did not have time to go after cases like theirs. So the muscular young scam artist got away with it. John's wealthy friend Hermógenes had had similar experiences. For instance, he knew the name and place of business of the thief who had broken into his home and gave it to the police, but they did nothing about it. When robbers broke in again later on and held him—along with his wife and some adult children—at gunpoint, the district attorney again failed to prosecute. Justice in Chile is thus both selective and arbitrary, and, as in John's case, often politically motivated or driven to satisfy the visceral, base desires of the masses or lynch mobs stirred up by biased mass-media coverage.

Meanwhile, prison life provided its own circus-style entertainment, action, and surprises. Castro had changed roll call time to 8:40, but Cisternas continued to run the show according to his own rules, informing the new *machucados* that they would be kicked out of 118 or 118A/B if drugs were found in their cells. The newcomers were remarkably different than what John, Miami, Rubén, Ismael, and others expected, with twenty-two turning out to hear Cristián preach on the Good Samaritan, including Jorge, Marino, Aaron, Ismael, Luchito, John and his cellmate Cristián. Later, John got to know Cristián the evangelical barber's cellmate Patricio Andrés Soto Gaete (30), a smoker claiming to be an Evangelical who had been transferred out of 111 after being tortured, along with his supposed partner in crime, mostly illiterate Kens (34), who likewise professed faith, while the other related bandit, Luís Felipe remained in either 111 or 112. The local drug trafficker in 111 was trying to coerce twelve million pesos out of Patricio, which he was mistakenly thought to have acquired during the robbery with intimidation of a home in Viña del Mar on 8 Norte Street. Patricio was also being held on charges of receiving stolen goods. As he recounted the story, he was an Uber driver who was called—not through normal Uber channels but directly—by his friend Luís Felipe to take him and his pal Kens to a home where they ended up doing the robbery. He was haplessly charged as being the getaway man even though he said he knew nothing about the robbery until Kens threatened him with his pistol and told him to wait for them. John found it curious that Kens and Patricio seemed to be such good friends in prison after beginning with such enmity beforehand.

It struck John as odd that the robbers or scam artists who harmed him or his friend Hermógenes were never arrested but those who affected some other people were. He resolved once again that Chilean society was unjust and the rule of law was arbitrary and quite capricious. He had been the victim of both common criminals and state-paid ones. That day, John read a little less and only played chess twice. He instead spent an hour teaching Patricio, Alan, Rubén, and Cristián (evangelical barber) some English phrases and pronunciation. The latter paused to lead a special prayer service on the *patio* after news spread of Roberto being killed across the way in 114—in some fight—with two others wounded. The odd thing to John was to see how prison Pentecostals treated other inmates as if they were somehow part of the family of God (*pueblo*) despite the fact that they had no deep or abiding religious interest. It was as if these unsaved people were considered part of a self-deluded religious family without any reason to believe that they had any hope of salvation. Was there any real reason to believe that people like Roberto were not in hell now or well on their way?

Alan made a similar error the next day when he preached to fourteen (dwindling to nine) about the benefits of prayer and the *reos'* need to trust God to help them with their needs through prayer. There were forty-three *reos* (several arriving late) when Cisternas finally called for formation at around 9:30 a.m., so the turnout for the service was even more meager in percentage terms than the day before. But Alan was talking to largely unsaved men. "Why would God answer their prayers?", John asked the youngster privately afterwards, who himself had only been converted in prison a year earlier. "The Bible teaches that God 'is angry with the wicked every day'" (Psalm 7:11). Likewise, the prayer service for slain *vivo* Argentine Roberto (*Che*)—stabbed in the heart (according to Cisternas) the day before out on the *patio* in *Roma* (114)—made little sense. He was an unsaved tough guy who had, sadly, died in his sins. For security, his brother (also called *Che*) had been moved to cell number 16 on the fourth floor of 118. Cisternas told John that the reason he opened the cell doors so late, around 9:20 a.m., had to do with him helping out with increased security efforts in other *módulos* after the slaying. Hence, some *reos*

were concerned about a possible crackdown by the *gendarmes*. Indeed, John's cellmate Cristián decided it best to pitch his pot pipe, rather than run the risk of something bad happening if their cell were searched. Alexis, who, like John, was not overly concerned, stopped by the dining hall and brought John a banana from Marcelo. He let John know that all was well living with Delfín for the time being. John, however, was in for a tough week since Pamela did not arrive with *encomienda* sacks—the first time in nearly a year. Her normally reliable Uber driver Andrés did not pick her up, nor did his flakey substitute (his sister, Ingrid). Thus, John was without food for the week and Pamela had an unintended abundance to eat on her own. As one might imagine, she was fit to be tied. Besides beating Rubén, Fernando, and Ricardo in chess, the only good news John got during the day was from Leonardo, early in the morning, who spoke in English through the portal while John was bathing. He told John that he had seen a file in the statistics office—where he did his quasi-slave labor—that indicated that John would be eligible for *dominical* benefits starting in four months. For whatever reason, he said that John should keep that information secret, and that he would tell him more details the next day.

However, Leonardo's information turned out to be no news at all. He simply saw that John was scheduled in the system to start *dominical* benefits on November 21, 2021—in just over eight months, with weekends-home starting a few months afterwards and then eventually upgrading to being home every day—but still sleeping in a halfway house (or jail)—for six months, prior to full parole on November 21, 2022. John already knew this was the case. If a *CET* could not be arranged, or he could not be transferred to an Italian prison, or he were not pardoned by the *ley indulto*—still working its way through Congress—those dates served as backstops. Leonardo had still not contacted his managerial friend at *The Clinic* or his other press connections to interview John, claiming that he had insufficient internet connectivity to make his email work. So they spent several hours talking about the theology of the state, considering Romans 13:1-4, Isaiah 5:20, Titus 3:1, and 1 Peter 2:13-17. The teaching formed part of a good worship service, which also included singing Psalm 100 and a time of prayer. Afterwards, they discussed Marxist theory and free market or biblical/libertarian views, wherein Leonardo was in shock that John wrote in his book *Políticas Públcas* that taxation is legalized theft, which is just as wrong as illegal theft, and that the ends do not justify the means (Romans 3:8). Miami was in on that part of the discussion, too, while Rubén looked on. For the last hour, Leonardo shared very interesting details about Mapuche history and why Bernardo O'Higgins (Chile's Liberator) was the common man's champion, over against the super-rich Carrera brothers or the traitor Manuel Rodríguez. Yet, John realized that Chile's Founding Fathers were nothing like America's.

That Sunday featured fifty-five *reos* in the two-row lineup, most of whom did not have showers in their cells. Hence, it was nearly impossible for either John or Miami to get in and clean the bathroom and shower area as men continued to pour in one after the other. The vile heap of used toilet paper next to each toilet reached well over a foot high. The rude mess was finally cleaned just before the men had to return to their cells. Yet, at least the whole day was not absorbed with that disgusting task. Before the church service, the main talk in the dining hall was about the non-arrival of John's *encomienda*. The amount of good food John gave to others was significant and, thus, sorely missed. Rubén moaned about not getting pizza, others grumbled about the absence of *guacamole*, burritos, and John's now famous sandwiches. John's cellmate Cristián stood and told them that they had been mooching off John for months and that they should all pony up now and make sure he gets some food during the week. They probably would do so. Michael and others offered some solutions to get those sacks into 118. But the best one was

offered by Cristián the evangelical barber, who had just given John a chicken and mayonnaise with avocado sandwich: he would ask a Christian friend in 111 (where *encomienda* is received on Mondays) to receive the two sacks, keeping the small package of goodies nestled inside for himself. Then, while he was out making his bartering rounds on Monday, Cristián would pick the sacks up and bring them to John. Besides a mix-up in the delivery of the small package, the plan went smoothly. Pamela arrived early in her complimentary Uber ride, but the line was still long given that 111 houses three to four times more *reos* than 118. Unfortunately, the Uber driver, Ingrid, was given a 60,000-peso parking ticket for parking too close to the prison entrance. So she was having a bad couple of days. But, in the end, John got his provisions—even if fifty hours late and less than usual.

In general, things were going along fairly smoothly — if one may make such an assertion about life in terrestrial hell. Monday, March 15, 2021, featured thirty-eight *reos* in the lineup, most of whom disappeared to their cells afterwards. John read a fair amount, in spite of the fact that 118's cell doors were opened very late (9:57 a.m.), and won six games of chess. His record stood at 1,745-150-39, plus 172-17-0 online. His cell life with Cristián was going well, too. The young man had stopped smoking pot in the cell and was doing a good job cleaning, and was even heating the first batch of John's bathing water to make their mornings more efficient. He, too, enjoyed the pizza and food Pamela brought.

The little preaching or devotional moment prior to breakfast was doing well, with twelve to fifteen men standing in attendance to listen to Cristián, Alan, or John. After Cristián preached on John 3:1-12 (regeneration), John helped him outline the next morning's talk on a related theme using Psalm 7:11-13 and 2 Corinthians 5:16-17 and 21. Both men were happily involved in doing something they liked in 118, besides John's work with the Historic Baptists via Zoom.

Yet, John remained puzzled and indignant about the injustice he had experienced, leading to his present unjust suffering. Men who had committed far greater crimes were given home arrest or lighter sentences than John got, underscoring that he was, in reality, a political prisoner who had been deemed guilty by the biased mass media. Nevertheless, he had peace with God, and Pamela, his children Grace and David, and his many friends and well-wishers were making the best of it. He had four options for early release, but action on any of them, especially the *ley indulto*, was out of his hands. All he could do was maintain his good conduct by cleaning the bathroom and shower area, and Pamela would have to get a notarized copy of one or more of his college degrees submitted to the *gendarmes*, in order to allow him to attain the highest conduct marks—required for early release benefits. However, thanks to the generosity of one of his faithful backers, lawyers Pablo Larredonda and Carlos Palacios in Santiago would be able to take John's case if final terms could be agreed on. Hopefully they would be expediting his early release, preferably to a *CET*. Pablo was optimistic that he could help both John and Miami get released in the near future. In the meantime, John comforted himself with what Christ said in Luke 21:19, "By your patience possess your souls."

Appendix

Verses from which chapter titles were derived:
Bearing the Cross

And whoever does not **bear his cross** and come after Me cannot be My disciple.
(Luke 14:27)

Chapter I

A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.
(Proverbs 16:9)

Chapter II

“Because they have forsaken Me and made this an alien place, because they have burned incense in it to other gods whom neither they, their fathers, nor the kings of Judah have known, and have filled this place with **the blood of the innocents.**”

(Jeremiah 19:4)

useless wranglings of **men of corrupt minds** and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

(1 Timothy 6:5)

Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: **men of corrupt minds**, disapproved concerning the faith;

(2 Timothy 3:8)

Chapter III

I tell you, in that night there will be two men in one bed: the one will be taken and the other will be left. Two women will be grinding together: the **one will be taken and the other left**. Two men will be in the field: the **one will be taken and the other left**.

(Luke 17:34-36)

Chapter IV

Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed, but they have no comforter—**On the side of their oppressors there is power**, but they have no comforter. (Ecclesiastes 4:1)

Chapter V

For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer, **if you take it patiently**, this is commendable before God. (1 Peter 2:20)

Chapter VI

A present is a precious stone in the eyes of its possessor; **wherever he turns, he prospers**.
(Proverbs 17:8)

Chapter VII

...having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, **glorify God in the day of visitation**.

(1 Peter 2:12)

Chapter VIII

But **let none of you suffer** as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. (1 Peter 4:15)

Chapter IX

And though the Lord gives you **the bread of adversity** and the water of affliction, yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers.
(Isaiah 30:20)

Chapter X

Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days.
(Ecclesiastes 11:1)

Chapter XI

This salutation by my own hand—Paul. **Remember my chains.** Grace be with you. Amen.
(Colossians 4:18)

Chapter XII

For God has **not given us a spirit of fear, but of power** and of love and of a sound mind.
(2 Timothy 1:7)

Chapter XIII

redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:16)
Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, **redeeming the time**.
(Colossians 4:5)

Chapter XIV

For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and **one is hungry and another is drunk.**
(1 Corinthians 11:21)

Chapter XV

But others save with fear, **pulling them out of the fire**, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.
(Jude 23)

Chapter XVI

And the God of peace will **crush Satan under your feet** shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.
(Romans 16:20)

Chapter XVII

Do not be overly wicked, nor be foolish: Why should you die before your time?
(Ecclesiastes 7:17)

Chapter XVIII

Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. **The dragon gave him his power**, his throne, and great authority.
(Revelation 13:2)

Chapter XIX

Jesus answered, “**You Could Have No Power at All** against Me unless it had been given you

from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.” (John 19:11)

Chapter XX

So he answered and said to me: “This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: ‘**Not by might nor by power**, but by My Spirit,’ Says the Lord of hosts.”
(Zechariah 4:6)

Chapter XXI

It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is **sown in weakness**, it is **raised in power**.
(1 Corinthians 15:43)

Chapter XXII

‘to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and **from the power of Satan to God**, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’
(Acts 26:18)

...The shocking and tragic story of an innocent professor and pastor tried and imprisoned in Chile.

About the author



John Cobin received his Ph.D. in public policy and M.A. in economics from George Mason University, and an M.A. in business economics from the University of California at Santa Barbara, plus a B.A. in the same field from California State University, Long Beach. He also has an undergraduate degree in religious studies from Reformed Bible College and some graduate coursework in the same field from

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